



FALL 2014-SPRING 2015

## KINESIOLOGY AND HEALTH NEWSLETTER

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## *Taking the Textbook to Practice*

## STUDENT ATHLETES IN K&H

As athletes and physical education seniors, Kyle Sullivan and Jordan Sibrel demonstrate how simultaneously studying exercise and living an athletic life provides insights into both.

Sullivan is on the UW track team, a sport he has participated in for seven years, and he also has experience with football and basketball. Sibrel plays on UW's women's basketball team, which she has fourteen years of experience in, and has also played soccer and volleyball. While the sports they have chosen are dissimilar, the ways in which their studies and their athletic activities intersect have noteworthy commonalities.

Both students report that what they have learned in their physical education classes has enhanced their sports training experience. Sibrel explains, "Now I think about how and why I am doing the things I do when [I am] training," rather than simply following her coach's instructions. Sullivan seconds this, stating that it gives "me better insight into what I'm actually doing to myself." By living out the real-world manifestations of their coursework, Sullivan and Sibrel can combine their passions and improve their athletic performance—and better understand how to apply what they have learned for their future students.

Beyond their studies helping them on the racetrack and court, the flip-side is also true: these two students' sports experience also helps them better understand their field of study. Sullivan says that being able to connect what he learns to real life and recall specific experiences helps him study and perform well on exams. Sibrel feels the same way, and has especially seen connections between basketball and her sports psychology course, helping her succeed in that class.

In the future, both students plan to be elementary P.E. teachers, having loved their experiences teaching young children as part of their coursework at UW. Sullivan

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Kyle Sullivan





explains that even when he feels he is not explaining things well to children, they still enjoy the activities and appreciate him—and this inspires him to continue to mentor this age group. He may consider coaching and graduate school later on, but plans to enter the workforce right away, hopefully still in Wyoming. Sibrel is also excited to start her career, as she has long loved working with children, and is definitely interested in coaching basketball. She is also considering the possibility of graduate work in special education.

Sibrel and Sullivan show that when K&H studies are backed by personal, real-world experience, students' understanding of the subject matter is all the richer. Given the solid foundation that this experience has provided both student athletes with, their careers promise to be a boon to their students and to make UW's division of K&H proud.



Jordan Sibrel, third from the left

## *Bringing Real Life to the Classroom*

### GRETCHEN SEWCZAK-CLAUDE

The Division of Kinesiology and Health's newest addition, Assistant Lecturer Dr. Gretchen Sewczak-Claude, brings with her an ardent focus on real-world application.

Sewczak-Claude has eight years of experience as a physical therapist and is currently employed at High Country Physical Therapy in addition to instructing at UW. She wanted to be a teacher even before she became interested in physical therapy, and she enjoys the opportunity that teaching gives her to provide students with a "better base of knowledge" before they enter the workforce.

This position at UW enables Sewczak-Claude to stay in the state she now loves. She originally visited Wyoming when her work as a travelling physical therapist landed her in Casper and she was instantly captivated by how this state makes it so easy to be active in the outdoors. Now that she is able to both teach and practice physical therapy in Laramie, she intends to stay here permanently.



So far, Sewczak-Claude's favorite course to teach is Functional Movement Analysis, which she also helped to develop. This course combines her work experience as both a clinician and an academic, and she explains that instead of just teaching students about anatomy, she can show them how to "apply [the subject matter] to everyday movement."

Her advice to students is to "take as many opportunities as [they] can to expose [themselves] to different aspects of the field,"

trying out the diverse array of career possibilities to which a kinesiology degree can lead. She also stresses the importance of gaining plenty of real-world experience through internships before pursuing graduate studies.

Even though Sewczak-Claude has always wanted to be a teacher, she has found instructing at UW to be even more enjoyable than she anticipated. She emphasizes that each individual client and student influences her work, to the point that she feels like a student herself—and she greatly looks forward to using these experiences to grow as a teacher.



## Giving Back to Wyoming: AMBER TRAVSKY

Teaching karate at UW is only one among many ways that K&H graduate and soon-to-be-former UW instructor Amber Travsky uses her passion and experience to benefit the Wyoming community.

Travsky's graduate work and career have combined her two loves of wildlife biology and teaching physical fitness, and she has taught at UW, LCCC, WyoTech, and her own karate school. She has also written articles for the *Laramie Boomerang* and *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*, as well as two books. Her own physical fitness activities are even more varied than her work: in addition to being an eighth degree black belt, she mountain bikes and hikes when conducting wildlife biology fieldwork, and regularly cycles, skis, and swims. She is a regular participant in the Wyoming Senior Olympics, which inspires her to try new sports, and is currently a "streaker," running at least one mile a day, every day, a habit she has maintained since November 2013.

In the UW community, Travsky is best known as the karate instructor for the past thirty years. Those university classes were discontinued after spring 2015, but she continues to help others become empowered through martial arts at her own karate school, the Laramie Kempo Karate Club. Her school currently has eighty students, some of whom she has known since they were children—evidencing her ability to inspire others to be active for life.



Outside of Laramie, Travsky is known as the founder and director of the Tour de Wyoming, a six-day, cross-state bicycle ride each July that is now in its nineteenth year. Its first year, Travsky practically had to beg people to participate just to enlist forty riders, but now, there has to be a lottery because far more people are interested than the 350-rider maximum. The Tour de Wyoming serves as a fundraiser for the non-profit organization Cycle Wyoming, which promotes safe cycling across the state through

such activities as providing bike helmets for children and helping to fund trail building at Glendo State Park.

Serving her community is not a secondary result of Travsky's participation in her interests, however: it is the entire point. "If I didn't have [the Tour de Wyoming]," she says, "I'd find something else to give back to my community." Indeed, this is apparent in some of her other volunteer work, such as teaching children at Happy Jack how to ski—and telling them about some wildlife markings on nearby trees while she is at it.

To convince children, and everyone, to be active in the outdoors, Travsky says, "I think it's important, no matter what, to be an example." Beyond her active lifestyle, the constant use of her knowledge and skills to serve her community is also a wonderful example for everyone involved in UW's K&H program.

## THANK YOU, DONORS!

The Division of Kinesiology & Health would like to thank the following donors for their contributions. Due primarily to their support, the division has been able to offer academic scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students, fund student travel to professional conferences for educational development and presentation of research, as well as purchase necessary equipment for integral undergraduate and graduate courses. If you are interested in contributing to the enhancement of students' learning in the Division of Kinesiology & Health, please refer to the donation information on page 7.

Thanks to our donors who have contributed between May 2014 and May 2015.

Mrs. Mary Lou Bishop  
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Dr. J. Ward and Mrs. Anne Tishler



## *Never Stop Learning:* ALEX GARN

While Dr. Alex Garn has found great success as an associate professor at Louisiana State University (LSU) after earning his master's degree in kinesiology at UW, he still approaches his work with a desire to always learn more.

Garn's interest in kinesiology began early in life when he observed the confidence and solid work ethic that sports instilled into various areas of his life. Having always wanted to teach, he earned his bachelor's degree in physical education in Iowa and began coaching at public schools, but he could not shake the feeling that he "wanted to learn more." He continued on with graduate degrees from UW and Indiana University.

Garn's passion for always learning has carried through to his research, and he credits UW with being his first experience with the research process. He greatly "value[s] and cherish[es]" the mentoring, guidance, and "strong foundation" that UW provided him with in this area. Today, his research focuses on the "psychological factors" that impact children's and adolescents' "physical activity motivation and behaviors" both in and out of school.

The impact of Garn's work on schoolchildren is certainly worthy of recognition. He has worked with students living in poverty in Detroit and obese children



in Louisiana. There, he and an LSU colleague obtained grant funding to create fitness programs for six school districts, training teachers how to use Fitness-gram, a method used to monitor and track students' BMI, cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, and endurance.

Garn uses his research to help teachers develop methods to inspire children to be active, insisting that the "one-size model [of physical education] doesn't work very well," as some children may be more drawn

to competition or sports, and others to cooperation or games. He identifies three steps that work best to inspire students: (1) "Create an environment that allows [the students] to feel successful," (2) develop a relationship with the children and show that you actually care about their health, and (3) give them agency in choosing what type of physical activity to participate in.

Garn also wants to inspire current K&H students to succeed in their courses and careers. He states that students sometimes put barriers in their own way by thinking that they cannot learn certain things, so he instead encourages them to be open to new challenges. After all, he explains, a career in this field is "all about learning new things," so embracing this "attitude of learning and hard work" now will only render them even better prepared.

## *Developing Scholarship Beyond the Classroom*

### QIN "ARTHUR" ZHU

For Dr. Qin "Arthur" Zhu, his recent promotion to tenured associate professor provides him with the opportunity to conduct longer-term quality research, which he loves sharing with his students in both the classroom and the research laboratory.

Zhu, previously an assistant professor, was promoted and granted tenure in August 2014 and says that the primary change has occurred in his research, as he now has time to extend his original research. Currently, he is approaching his recent findings on "computer-joystick-based bimanual coordination learning" with new questions, providing the system for stroke victims

at local clinics to use and see if they can benefit from "computer-joystick simulated bimanual training" to relearn and improve basic skills like dressing themselves and cooking. He is also passionate about continuing his research on the sport of badminton, for which his previous findings have been featured on NPR's *Science Friday* program.

Dr. Zhu is also collaborating extensively with researchers in other disciplines. Currently, this includes exploring the development of "user-friendly 3-D computer interaction" and "human-friendly and effective rehab robots." His recent collaboration with

Continued on page 6

# 2014-2015 STUDENT AND FACULTY SUCCESSES

## STUDENT SUCCESSES

### GRADUATE ADMISSIONS

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**Cassie Ayres**, M.S. in Kinesiology and Health, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming

**Sam Cauffman**, M.S. in Exercise Science, University of Alabama, Birmingham, Alabama

**Katie Cawthorn**, P.A., Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

**Hayley Charlton**, D.P.T., Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri

**Kendra Fitzke**, Palmer College of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa

**Kyle Graves**, D.P.T., Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions, Provo, Utah

**Adam Heessel**, D.P.T., Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon

**Taylor Hinshaw**, M.S. in Kinesiology and Health, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming

**Sarah Leddige**, D.P.T., Eastern Washington University, Spokane, Washington

**Lex Leonhardt**, D.O., West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, Louisville, West Virginia

**Kasi Litzel**, D.P.T., Midwestern University, Glendale, Arizona

**Jen Luck**, M.S.A.T., University of Texas, Arlington, Texas

**Chris Otto**, P.A., University of Washington, Seattle, Washington

**Heather Reiner**, D.P.T., University of Montana, Missoula, Montana

**Dylln Rider**, Chiropractic school, University of Western States, Portland, Oregon

**Mitchell Stephenson**, Doctorate in Kinesiology (Presidential Fellowship), Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

**Young Wang**, Dental school, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

**Dustin Worthington**, Chiropractic school, Parker University, Dallas, Texas

### PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLE PUBLICATIONS

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**Shaochen Huang** (with 6 other writers who are not UW students)—The 50's cliff: A decline in perceptuo-motor learning, not a deficit in visual motion perception, PLoS ONE.

**Mitchell Stephenson** and **Rebecca Moynes** (with 5 other writers who are not UW students)—Total and lower extremity lean mass percentage positively correlates with jump performance, Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research.

### RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

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**Ryan Arey** (faculty advisor Qin Zhu)—Bimanual coordination training to improve upper limb function post stroke (University of Wyoming EPSCoR Undergraduate Student Research Fellowship, \$800)

**Kyle Graves** (faculty advisor Boyi Dai)—The effects of forms and external loading on maximum power production during push-up exercises (University of Wyoming EPSCoR Undergraduate Student Research Fellowship, \$800)

**Taylor Hinshaw** (faculty advisor Boyi Dai)—The effects of specific signal latencies on ACL loading factors in an unanticipated jump and cut maneuver (University of Wyoming EPSCoR Undergraduate Student Research Fellowship, \$800)

### AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

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**Shannon Conk**—Cheney Study Abroad Grant to Tenerife, Spain (University of Wyoming, \$600); International Programs/Health Sciences Study Abroad Scholarship to Tenerife, Spain (University of Wyoming, \$1,500)

**Tyler Rasmussen**—Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award

### RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

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**Melvin Arthur**—Northern Arapaho food sovereignty (Shepard Symposium Presentation)

Continued on page 6



## STUDENT AND FACULTY SUCCESSES Continued from page 5

**Andrea Dahill** and **Daniel Tryon** (with 3 other presenters who are not UW students)—The influence of musical training on lifting bottles of unknown weights (poster for NASPSPA conference, Portland, Oregon)

**Shaochen Huang** (with 4 other researchers who are not UW students)—Haptic information is more reliable than visual information in learning a novel pattern of bimanual coordination (oral paper for NASPSPA conference, Portland, Oregon)

### UW HEALTH SCIENCES GRAND ROUNDS PRESENTATIONS AND AWARDS

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7 posters by K&H students

5 presentations by K&H students

Grand Rounds Student Research Grants:

*Candace Garner* (\$1000)

*Shaochen Huang* (\$1,000)

*Hunter Perala* (\$600)

*Victoria Shiver* (\$1,000)

*Tyler Trumble* (\$400)

*Peter Wilcox* (\$1,000)

Grand Rounds Student Travel Awards (\$750):

*Mara Cosgrove*

*Harry Fisher*

*Shaochen Huang*

*Victoria Shiver*

*Mitchell Stephenson*

Grand Rounds Competitive Oral Presentation:

*Mara Cosgrove*, 1st place

Grand Rounds Competitive Poster Presentation:

*Rebecca Moynes*, 2nd place

## 2013-2015 FACULTY SUCCESSES

11 articles in the press

42 articles published

1 book chapter in the press

3 book chapters published

1 book published

4 research grants and contracts submitted

19 research grants and contracts awarded

68 national and international presentations

8 invited presentations

11 K&H media highlights

## SCHOLARSHIP BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: ZHU Continued from page 4

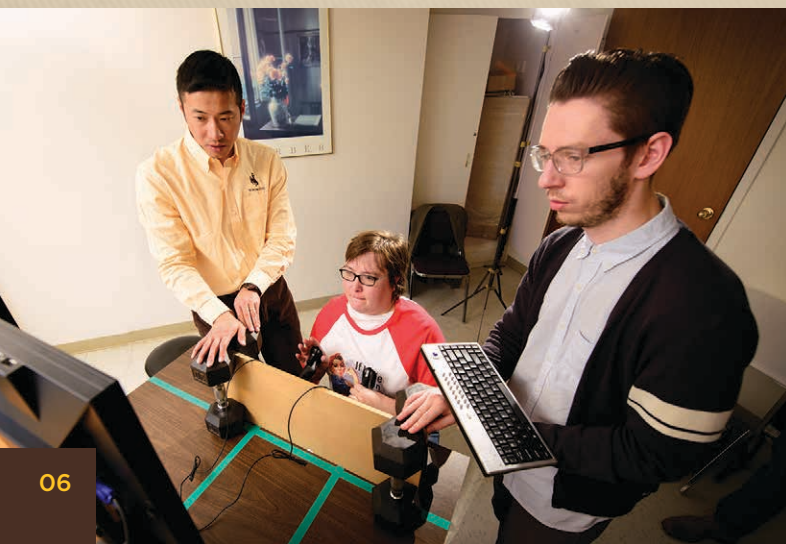
psychologists, anthropologists, and archeologists from Britain addresses the “suitability of a spheroid for throwing in the Stone Ages.”

Zhu is also using his promotion to benefit the larger Division of Kinesiology and Health. He explains that as a new senior faculty member, he is now in the position to share his tenure-track experiences with junior faculty, as well as to aid the department by serving on various

academic committees. Because he has now built up more experience, he feels he has more valuable input and advice to share.

In the classroom, Zhu greatly looks forward to being able to share more of his research to supplement academic instruction with “practical knowledge.” One of his favorite undergraduate courses to teach is Motor Behavior: since it is a core course that all K&H students are required to take, it enables him to interact with students holding diverse career goals. In this and all of his classes, Zhu emphasizes critical thinking as imperative to the field of kinesiology since it is necessary to “reflect on the existing methods for teaching or training motor skills” in order to “create new methods to increase effectiveness and efficiency.” To help his students develop this critical thinking, he encourages multiple attempts and rewards effort.

As Zhu continues his career at UW, K&H students can look forward to learning fresh findings as he continues to make new discoveries with colleagues in his field.





## Working for Wyoming: CHRISTINE PORTER

Dr. Porter serves in the Division of Kinesiology and Health as an Assistant Professor, and in August 2014 she was awarded a prestigious promotion to the Wyoming Excellence Chair in Community and Public Health. The university was impressed with how her extensive work for the state, especially the Food Dignity project she directs, has received national attention (including the 2014 Community-Campus Partnerships for Health Award), and they saw that the positive impact of Porter's research with the people of Wyoming is something to invest in. This position is a particularly noteworthy accomplishment because she is not yet tenured, so Porter identifies this promotion as an incredible honor. She adds that it "redoubles my commitment and mandate to work for the interests of the people of Wyoming."

For those who know Porter, her seeing this promotion in terms of service to her community will come as no surprise, given that she identifies her life's work as, "to help build healthy, equitable communities where everyone can thrive." She works to accomplish this through food, she explains, because "everybody eats." Those who have taken her classes know that she



encourages her students to get involved, as well, and some have gone above and beyond course requirements to start real-world projects, including a trial food pantry and the Cowboy Food Sharing program (which partners UW and the Laramie Soup Kitchen).

Outside the classroom, Porter serves as project director and principal investigator for the Food Dignity project ([www.fooddignity.org](http://www.fooddignity.org)), which conducts research with community partners across the nation on how to build community food systems that "feed us all now and feed our grandchildren in the future."

Porter is also working with community partners to research the health impacts of gardens, which so far indicates that gardens may "improve BMI, mental health, and physical strength."

Examining just the highlights of Porter's work, her passion and dedication are obvious—something UW has clearly noticed, as well, to grant her the prestigious promotion to Excellence Chair. The Division of Kinesiology and Health, Laramie, and the entire state can all expect to see wonderful new discoveries and projects coming from Porter's work with Wyoming.

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## *Expanding Perspective:* TAMI BENHAM-DEAL

While Dr. Tami Benham-Deal's recent promotion draws most of her time away from the Division of Kinesiology and Health, this honor highlights her commitment to the University of Wyoming and will mean future benefits for the division.

Benham-Deal, a professor in K&H, previously served as the associate dean of the College of Health Sciences, and in September 2014 was asked to serve as the interim associate vice president of academic personnel. This new role entails overseeing the hiring of academic personnel for the entire university and tracking and analyzing personnel outcomes and issues. She is also responsible for administering the university's annual reappointment, tenure, and promotion (RT&P) review process, ensuring that the process is compliant with relevant university regulations. Her past experiences serving as faculty chair for the university RT&P committee was one of the reasons that UW Vice President Dr. David L. Jones asked her to take on these new duties.

Benham-Deal's great passion is teaching, as she emphasizes that it is the students who have kept her at UW for twenty-five years. This is one of the reasons she has chosen to continue teaching now even though it is not part of her current job description. She says that whenever she is asked how class was, she always responds, "It was great!" because teaching does not feel like work. Her favorite course is Lifespan Motor



Development because she gets to help students aspiring to a variety of kinesiology careers "develop the knowledge and skills they need to ensure that their programs are developmentally appropriate for any age group."

Beyond this promotion being a great honor, it will also help Benham-Deal better serve students in K&H. She explains that this new role enables her to see "another side of the university" she was never exposed to before, much like the experience she had when

her son became a UW student and she was able to see the university through a parent's eyes. Her newfound, "behind-the-scenes" understanding has reinforced her belief that UW is an outstanding university—something for which Wyoming residents and UW alumni can be proud. She is especially excited about the positive impact some of the university's new strategic initiatives may have on teaching and learning at UW. A good example, she explains, is how the science initiative has brought campus-wide attention to the use of active learning strategies in the classroom. All told, Benham-Deal believes that the experience she is having this year will render her a more helpful teacher, adviser, and colleague.

This prestigious promotion demonstrates that both the Division of Kinesiology and Health and the College of Health Sciences have a fantastic asset on their staff in Benham-Deal, and upon her return to her previous positions, her newfound perspective promises to make K&H students' educational experience even better.