Pamela Duncan, PT, PhD, FAPTA, FHA to Deliver 2015 Gossman Lecture

Pamela Duncan, PT, Ph.D., FAPTA, FHA will deliver the 2015 Marilyn Gossman Lecture for Advancement in Physical Therapy on May 15, 2015, in Heritage Hall, (1401 University Blvd, Birmingham, AL 35294) on the UAB Campus from 5:30-7:30 pm. Duncan is a nationally and internationally renowned expert in health policy, outcomes research and clinical epidemiology. Her expertise is in post-acute management of the elderly and individuals with stroke and other complex chronic conditions.

She is Professor of Neurology and Director of Innovations and Transitional Outcomes for Wake Forest Baptist Health. Her secondary appointments are in the Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology, Division of Public Health Sciences, and the Translational Sciences Institute. In 2012, she was selected by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to its Innovation Advisors Program. Duncan was one of 73 health care professionals chosen from 920 applications through a competitive process, to lead pioneering work that tests new models of care for those who are covered by Medicare, Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In November 2013, she was selected for the Roster of Fulbright Specialists to be eligible to collaborate with global partners to develop and lead interdisciplinary seminars and to develop curriculum to prepare the next generation of clinical and public health providers to: 1) practice as teams, 2) manage the multiple factors contributing to the public health challenges of a growing aging populations and 3) develop integrated systems of care to manage patients across the continuum of care.

Dr. Duncan’s current focus is on the development and implementation of strategies to improve care and functional status for individuals at the highest risk for hospital readmissions, especially the Medicare/Medicaid dual eligible. Over the past two years she has developed coalitions of health care providers, payers, and community based organizations to integrate medical care and community services to improve health management of medically and socially complex patients in the Northwest Triad of North Carolina. Duncan recently received a $14 million PCORI grant which will involve patients recovering from stroke in 50 hospitals in North Carolina to find out if early discharge with ongoing support by PTs and other providers results in better daily function outcomes than longer hospital stays and standard transitional care. The study “will also consider caregiver strain, hospital readmission rates and mortality, use of health care, consistency of physician care, use of transitional care services, and death,” Duncan writes in her summary of the project. Among her many awards and recognitions, Duncan was selected as the 2003 Mary McMillan Lecturer for the American Physical Therapy Association. For more details about the 2015 Gossman Lecture, see the insert on page 11 of this newsletter.

2015 Alumni Dinner to be held on May 16

The second annual Department of Physical Therapy Alumni Dinner will be held on Saturday, May 16, 2015, from 5:30-7:30 pm at the UAB National Alumni Society House located at 1301 10th Avenue South. Alumni from any of the educational programs sponsored by the UAB Department of Physical Therapy are encouraged to attend. The first Annual Alumni Dinner was held in May 2014 and marked the 50th Anniversary of the initiation of physical therapy education at UAB. Tickets for the event are $25. For more details, see the insert on page 11 of this newsletter.
Lowman Wins UAB President’s Award

John D. Lowman, PT, Ph.D., CCS, assistant professor in the UAB Department of Physical Therapy, wins the UAB President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. He is one of 11 UAB faculty members to be honored during the 2015 Faculty Awards Convocation.

“It is the hard work and successes of my students that make me look good. I would much rather that my students and mentors be esteemed more than I; that they be praised for their diligence and dedication, and I go unnoticed,” said Lowman. “It is an honor to employ and develop the gifts I have received, and I hope I will continue to work with prudence and patience, for the benefit of our students, and not waste my talents or rest in vain complacency. I sincerely appreciate all of the people that have encouraged and helped me develop as a teacher and I am sincerely humbled in being nominated for, and especially receiving, this award.”

The UAB Reporter profile of Lowman says:
Lowman was an early adopter of the Team-Based Learning™ teaching method and has mentored faculty converting their coursework into a TBL format. Using the method, students learn to function as part of a team and solve problems. In addition, Lowman is a member of the Effective Teaching Practice cohort in the UAB Center for Teaching and Learning.”

Jonathan Waugh, Ph.D., director of the center, said Lowman is committed to teaching excellence and his student-learning outcomes are evidence. Since Lowman joined UAB, student performance on the cardiopulmonary system of their licensure exam, which Lowman almost exclusively teaches, has gone from their lowest performing system to their highest. “John holds his students and himself to a very high standard not only for excellence in knowledge but applying it ethically and connecting it to professional values,” Waugh said.

Lowman, who won the 2013 School of Health Professions Excellence in Teaching Award, primarily teaches physiology, pathology/pathophysiology, pharmacology and cardiovascular and pulmonary patient/client management in the UAB Doctor of Physical Therapy program and the UAB Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Science program.

His primary focus involves exercise testing and prescription for people with cystic fibrosis and other chronic conditions. He also involved in developing clinical practice guidelines for exercise and mobility for patients in the intensive care unit.

Graham wins 2015 Volker Award

Cecilia Graham, PT, Ph.D. was named the 2015 recipient of the Joseph F. Volker Award at the 2015 SHP Faculty and Staff Awards Luncheon on March 2. The Joseph F. Volker Award is given to the regular, full-time faculty member who has demonstrated excellence in and dedication to teaching, distinctive research and other scholarly endeavors, and/or notable service to the School, University and community. Pictured here are Dr. Graham, Harold Jones, Ph.D., SHP Dean and David Morris, PT, Ph.D., Interim Chair of the UAB Department of PT.

Support your Department of Physical Therapy

Below are gift opportunities for the Department of PT.

Sharon Shaw Endowed Scholarship Fund
Physical Therapy Gifts
Physical Therapy Scholarship Gifts
Marilyn R. Gossman Endowed Lectureship
Shirley A. Shaddeau Memorial Scholarship Endowment
Bergman-Pinkston Endowed Professorship

To donate to the Department of Physical Therapy, please click here.
Albin Donates Gossman Thesis to UAB PT

Maurice S. Albin, M.D., professor of anesthesiology in the UAB School of Medicine, presented his copy of a Master’s Thesis, submitted by a young Marilyn Gossman, to the UAB Department of Physical Therapy as a historical archive. Albin was Gossman’s thesis Chair when she was a student at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland, Ohio in 1965, when Albin was an assistant professor at the same institution.

Gossman went on to earn a PhD and became recognized as a national leader in the physical therapy profession. She was also Chair of the UAB Department of Physical Therapy from 1968 to 1998 when she passed away following a battle with Breast Cancer. Albin presented the original copy of the thesis to the UAB Department of Physical Therapy in a ceremony held on Thursday, December 18, 2014, on the 6th floor of the School of Health Professions Building. Gossman’s thesis title was “Electrophysiological Evaluation of Experimental Spinal Cord Injury.”

Dr. Albin is an authority in the areas of spinal cord injury and venous air embolism. He has written extensively on the cerebrovascular dynamics associated with acute neurological trauma and anesthetic agents and adjuvants. He is also a noted historian in the field of anesthesia and substance abuse during the American Civil War. His publications number more than 300 articles, abstracts and book chapters including a book on spinal cord injury.

In a personal note to Dr. Albin, which he included in his donation, Gossman said, “you have given me a vision beyond the scope of this work and for this I cannot express enough gratitude.”

Speaking at the ceremony, David Morris, PT, Ph.D. and Interim Chair of the Department, stated “Dr. Albin’s gift is important as it reminds us of the fact that great leaders like Marilyn Gossman were first mentored by important teachers like Dr. Albin. We are truly grateful to Dr. Albin for sharing this valuable piece of history with us.”

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Department of PT Holds Annual Recruitment Day

On January 29th, clinicians and recruiters from UAB clinical education sites participated in a recruitment day event for UAB 3rd year DPT students. The event provided opportunities for the facilitators to meet the students and share information about current and/or future job opportunities. The activities also allowed the DPT students with opportunities to practice their interviewing skills. The event is held annually prior to the 3rd year students’ departure for their full-time clinical education experiences. For more information, contact Don Lein at dlein@uab.edu or 205-934-0241, Tara Pearce at tpearce@uab.edu or 205-934-5964 or Karen Stephenson at kelaine3@uab.edu or 205-934-3517.
Graham says Changing Environment Calls for Changing Curricula at Cerasoli Lecture

*This story written by Jenn Waters for CSM Daily News*

A concept-based approach to physical therapy education was the message delivered by Cecilia Graham, PT, PhD, during the 18th annual Pauline Cerasoli Lecture on February 6.

“A picture of the physical therapist of the future is emerging,” Graham said. “We envision movement system experts who are leaders, innovators, collaborators, and entrepreneurs who can synthesize rapidly changing information, integrate advances in technology into practice, and have the flexibility to thrive in an evolving health care environment.”

Her vision results in the creation of an exciting but challenging opportunity for educators to prepare future physical therapists and physical therapist assistants.

“I decided the time was right to begin a dialogue about future curriculum models in physical therapy,” she said. “I want to help stimulate discussion about what education models would be good [for the profession].”

She asked attendees to think about their experiences as students or clinical educators. “What aspects stuck with you the most? What made some experiences more meaningful than others?”

Graham then identified different factors that affect the need for curricular change. One factor is the information explosion.

Graham said, “Medical knowledge is exploding to the point that the information cannot be translated into the practice quick enough. At same time, social media provides us with an overwhelming amount of information every minute of every day.”

Concerning another factor, the changing health care environment, Graham said she wants to see health care policy and leadership concepts integrated throughout the curriculum rather than relegated to separate courses.

Turning to her vision for a concept-based curriculum for physical therapy education, Graham explained that a content-based curriculum is organized around concepts or “big ideas” rather than topics, with the focus being on deep understanding of the concepts.

“The emphasis is on active learning in authentic contexts using a variety of methods,” she said. Among the many benefits of a concept-based curriculum that Graham discussed were: 1) Encouragement of integrative thinking; 2) Alleviation of content saturation; 3) Emphasis on collaborative learning.

To look at the big picture, Graham asked the audience to imagine the possibilities in the following 4 areas: dialogue, curriculum structure, accreditation standards, and the clinical education model.

“There is a need for continued dialogue about curricular models,” said Graham. “If we consider a concept-based approach, we need to establish our ‘big ideas’ in physical therapy.”

As for the structure of the curricula, Graham believes programs could reduce the didactic component—“seat time” in the classroom—by reducing “content saturation” and including blended learning models and other online platforms. For the clinical education experience, she asked the audience to “imagine a clinical model that includes early integrated interactions with patients and clients in a variety of formats that could include grand rounds, virtual grand rounds, targeted visits to clinical sites, faculty practices, telehealth visits, and pro bono clinics.” For long-term clinical experiences, Graham suggested regional partnerships with fewer clinical sites, “perhaps 30 instead of 300.”

PASS IT ALONG

While we try to maintain alumni contact information, our records are not always up to date. Please share this newsletter with any colleagues and/or friends who are alumni of our program. Also, please encourage them to send their name, current home/work address, and email address to www.uab.edu/shp/alumni. If you would like to join or pay dues that have lapsed, please contact SHPAlumni@uab.edu
Welcome to Our New DPT Students

Fifty new 1st year DPT students (Class of 2017) began their course work in January of this year. The students and their hometowns are listed below. The picture below was taken at the 1st year DPT Student retreat held at Camp McDowell in February.

![Image of DPT students]

Jeffrey N. Ashurst  
Meredith Averbuch  
Brittney R. Baeke  
Hillary E. Baker  
Katie Banasiewicz  
Shelby L. Barker  
Casey Blackwelder  
Kylee A. Blake  
Mallory L. Boackle  
Kristen P. Braasch  
Natalie K. Brown  
Karen M. Claunch  
Kali M. Coleman

Danielle Dawkins  
Jazma Dobbins  
Daniel Durando  
Justin L. Eidsmoe  
Yemisi Elebute  
Grace C. Elledge  
Peyton C. Filippo  
Kristen J. Ford  
Dylan Heartsill  
Lacey L. Hill  
Hoyt Hughie  
Rachael Jones  
Martha J. Lamar

Carson G. Lawrence  
Kristina A. Logan  
Sandra Londono-Sweeney  
Shelby Marnitz  
Trey Martin  
Kylie McMahon  
Jimmy Nahoom  
Will Oldfield  
Emilly P. Phillips  
Damien E. Rosa  
Russell B. Salmon  
Stacey Sargent  
Forrest R. Scruggs

Abbey Sedlacek  
Katie Selman  
Erick D. Siqueira  
Wendy H. Sparks  
Erica J. Steed  
Erin M. Swann  
Abby Thompson  
Beth Wilsman  
Erika R. Wilson  
Camille P. Yokley

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We want to hear from you

The UAB department of PT is interested in hearing about the professional accomplishments of our alumni. Please share any significant professional accomplishments by emailing them to David Morris, PT, Ph.D. at morrissd@uab.edu
PT Chapter of the UAB National Alumni Society

Ashley Akers
Kelly Atkins
Brianna Bailey
Chris Baker
Jessica Brook
Kayla Brook
Rachel Brown
Camille Bryson
David Bryson
Angela Hightower Cameron
Taryn Cappadona
Stefanie Carie
Rebecca Chancey
Daniel Clements
Laudrey Cody
Hall Colvert
Joshua Cooke
Chris Davis
Bridgette Dean
Jonathan E. Delk
Michael DuBois
Hilary Dukes
Ann Duplantis
Brooke Elmore
Mary-Evelyn Feibelman
Stephen Foster
Michelle Guterrez
Christie Hart
Laura Hester
Katie Hubinger
Ashley Huffstutler
Wesley James
Chantel Jno-Finn
Kendell Jno-Finn
Haley Johnson
Allison Kneip
Justin Knight
Nathaniel Lang
Deborah LeCroy
Ashley Lynch
Tiffany McKlery
Chris Mills
Meghan Morales
David Morris
Rebecca O’Neal
Carlie Powell
Lindsay Powell
Terry Rhoades
Ryan Richardson
Rebecca Rodgers
Lauren Roy
Michael Schaefer
Matthew Sexton
Sharon Shaw
Ian Singletary
Leigh Smith
Emily Donohue Speer
Drew Standford
Meredith Syx
William Temple
Elizabeth Thorn
Aimee Webster
Frances Wedge
Aaron Weeks
Samantha Wheeler
Beth Whitehead
Kathryn Whitfield
Shedel Williams
Jennifer Wilson

Boger award winner

Emily Pile Thompson, PT, DPT from DCH Health System in Tuscaloosa, AL was the 2015 Loretta Boger recipient for excellence in clinical teaching. One of our recent alumni nominated Dr. Thompson for being an outstanding clinical instructor. Emily demonstrated compassion and caring for her patients/clients that makes her an inspiration to all those around her. She assisted our student in developing knowledge and skills when working in an inpatient rehabilitation setting. Throughout the entire clinical education experience, Emily displayed exceptional patient care, student instruction, and colleague assistance. UAB is proud to honor Emily Pile Thompson with this award. The following Individuals are past recipients of this reward:

1981
Betty G. Denton

1982
Rosalyn (Ra Ra) S. Schlitt

1983
Garvice G. Nicholson

1984
Albert J. DiMicco

1985
Jean E. Crago

1986
Janice D. Draper

1987
Deborah C. LeCroy

1988
David M. Morris

1989
Deborah E. Lechner

1991
Ellen Hamilton

1992
Beverly Bishop

1993
Patricia L. Perez

1995
Linda Freeman

1996
Julie Pounders

1997
Kim Marsh

1998
Melissa White

1999
Nancy McCracken

2000
Laura White

2001
Cathy Henderson

2002
Steve Howe

2003
Amy Jones

2004
Lulie Callaway

2008
Jonathan Zecher

2009
Janet Mitchell

2012
Jeffrey Soltes

2013
Chris Fountain

2014
Emily Pile Thompson
**Clinical education tip**

The second-year doctor of physical therapy students are currently researching web sites and our clinical education database to determine their placement preferences for next year’s long-term clinical experiences. They are also asking Tara and me questions about the slots provided by your clinics. Some of the questions include:

- Have the CIs received training to be clinical instructors by the APTA Credentialed Clinical Instructor Program?
- What specializations do the CIs have?
- What is the patient mix?
- What is the experience level of the PT staff?
- What types of specialty programs does the site have?
- Does the site have partnerships with other programs?
- Do the PTs work with other health professionals?
- What kind of community service does the site offer?
- Can we observe surgery?

And of course there is always questions of logistics like start time housing, location, and clinic attire. The Clinical Specific Information Form that you fill out and the information that we gather during clinical visits help us answer these questions. However, we know that clinic information is always changing and trying to inform us of these changes is challenging. To help you meet this challenge:

- Students are asking CCCEs if they can help them update the clinic’s CSIF during each their long-term clinical experience.
- Tara and I are conducting more site visits.
- Students during short-term experiences are providing more information about their CIs.
- We are encouraging sites to notify us of any changes at their site.
- All students are filling out the APTA Physical Therapist Student Evaluation: Clinical Experience and Clinical Instruction form that also contains a lot of this information.

In order to ensure the accuracy of information, we would encourage you to do two things. First, in your orientation of students, explain the various learning opportunities available at your site. Talk about the credentials and training that your PT staff has completed and the possibility of working with other health professionals for a day. Describe also some of the programs that the can participate in or observe. Secondly, as you go over the evaluations with your students, make sure that they write about all of the above in the evaluation and verify the accuracy of this information. Finally, let the students help you update your CSIF. Have the student collect the information needed prior to completing the CSIF, so that they can meet other staff PTS and PTAs as well as learn more about your clinic. Ultimately, all of these steps should allow us to accurately discuss your clinic with our second-year students.

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**Brown named Catherine Worthingham Fellow of the APTA**

David Brown, PT, Ph.D., FAPTA was recently selected as one of the 2015 Catherine Worthingham Fellow of the American Physical Therapy Association. Catherine Worthingham, PT, PhD, FAPTA, was a change agent who was effective, respectful, and honest, and motivated others to make an impact within the physical therapy profession. She was also a visionary who demonstrated leadership across the domains of advocacy, education, practice, and research. The purpose of the Catherine Worthingham Fellow designation (FAPTA) is to honor Dr. Worthingham and inspire all physical therapists to attain the high level of professional excellence and impact in terms of advancing the profession she exemplified.

The FAPTA designation is the highest honor among APTA’s membership categories and is given to a physical therapist or life physical therapist member of the association whose contributions to the profession through leadership, influence, and achievements demonstrate frequent and sustained efforts to advance the profession for a period of not less than 15 years preceding the nomination for election. Dr. Brown and the other new Fellow will be honored and the APTA Honors and Recognition Ceremony at the APTA NEXT Conference in June. Dr. Brown is Professor in the UAB Department of Physical, Director of the UAB PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences, and Interim Director of Research for the Department of PT.
Wilbanks Receives First PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences from UAB

Four years after arriving at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Susan Wilbanks—formerly Susan Silverman—is poised to make UAB history.

"I am the first student to graduate from the Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Science program!" she says.

The program, co-sponsored by the Department of Physical Therapy and the Department of Occupational Therapy, accepted its first cohort of students in the spring of 2011. "We couldn’t have asked for a better person to be the inaugural student in the Rehab Science PhD program," says Wilbanks’ research mentor, Scott Bickel, PhD. "Susan has been self-motivated, disciplined, and committed to excellence in her work."

"It makes me feel like I’ve done something pretty special," says Wilbanks. "When I look back to see how much I’ve done in the last four years, I can’t believe I’ve made it to this point."

Wilbanks’ journey began as an undergraduate member of the Creighton University rowing team. "I met several athletes with amputations," she says, "and that led me to Oregon State University, where I pursued an M.S. in Movement Studies in Disability." She discovered her passion for research in disability and rehabilitation while pursuing her master’s degree.

"Prior to that, I was planning to be a clinician," she says. "Now, I think I’ve found a nice balance in continuing to do research while training future clinicians.”

When asked how she chose the UAB School of Health Professions, Wilbanks replies that the School chose her. "I wanted to be near the Lakeshore Foundation," she explains. "This was before the UAB-Lakeshore Foundation Collaborative began. While researching jobs and schools in the area, I learned that UAB was starting a new Ph.D. program in 2011. I decided to apply."

Wilbanks defended her dissertation on January 27, 2015 Wilbanks’ primary research interests are the shoulder, shoulder pain, and exercise for manual wheelchair users. "As a rower and athletic trainer for my undergraduate baseball team, I have a love-hate relationship with the shoulder," she explains. "My first project at UAB involved researching exercises for people with spinal cord injuries. I found that manual wheelchair users often have shoulder pain that can be very detrimental to their quality of life.”

From there, Wilbanks investigated the differences between shoulder pain and muscle function in able-bodied people, and those with spinal cord injuries. "My primary premise was that we cannot treat manual wheelchair users with shoulder pain the same as an athlete or other able-bodied person," she says. "The demands placed on their arms are very different from the demands in overhead sports."

Wilbanks developed a functional electrical stimulation rowing machine that she used to do interventions for people with spinal cord injuries and related shoulder pain. She also published several papers, including a qualitative study with Dr. Nataliya Ivankoa investigating factors that influence return-to-work after spinal cord injury in adults.

"I see my research leading to preventative exercises which will help manual wheelchair users to maintain active lifestyles where it doesn’t hurt to move around because of shoulder pain," she says.


“We are very excited that Susan has reached this pinnacle of her many accomplishments," says program director David Brown, PhD. “From my perspective, as the first student to fully move through the entire PhD curriculum, Susan has demonstrated great versatility and flexibility with her ability to be a standard-bearer who has met and exceeded the very high requirements that we have set for our students in this program.”

Wilbanks recently took a position at Carroll University in Waukesha, WI, where she will teach exercise physiology and research methods to the Doctor of Physical Therapy students. "In five years, I hope to still be teaching and doing research at Carroll," she says. “My husband will be finishing his residency in Emergency Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison next May, at which point we hope to settle in the Milwaukee area permanently.”

From athlete, to aspiring clinician, to researcher and teacher, Wilbanks’ journey has been one of transformation and achievement. She hopes that she’s set a good example.

"I have always been driven to go beyond expectations, and I see a lot of very promising students in the classes behind me," she says. "I hope I’m setting the bar high for those who will graduate in the coming years."
Christy and Colleagues Open a Vestibular and Oculomotor Research Laboratory

*This story was originally written by Nicole Wyatt for UAB News*

A new research laboratory at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the first of this kind in Alabama and one of only a few in America, could lead to a better understanding of the effects of concussions.

The Vestibular and Oculomotor Research Laboratory, or VORLab, is conducting research to identify markers of mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), also known as concussion, in athletes. It is co-directed by Claudio Busettoni, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Vision Sciences, and Jennifer Christy, Ph.D., P.T., associate professor in the Department of Physical Therapy in the UAB School of Health Professions. Its executive committee includes Katherine Weise, O.D., MBA, FAAO, associate professor in the Department of Optometry, Mark Swanson, O.D., MSPH, professor in the Department of Optometry, and James Johnston, M.D., assistant professor in the Department of Neurosurgery.

Annually, more than 2 million cases of traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are diagnosed; of those, 75 percent are labeled as mTBI, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms typically include headache, dizziness and balance problems.

“Dizziness in patients with mTBI often is associated with blurred vision during head movements as well as vomiting and nausea. These symptoms likely are related to altered function of the vestibular system and/or subtle abnormalities in eye movements,” Busettoni said. “The Vestibulo-Ocular Reflex (VOR) system works to keep vision clear while the head is in motion, such as during reading from your cellphone while walking or, on the field, throwing a football while avoiding an opposing player.”

This interdisciplinary team will use the laboratory to search for mTBI biomarkers in the VOR and oculomotor systems of athletes by determining the negative consequences of mTBI on these systems.

“Objective biomarkers are especially important for athletes and young children who might not be able to properly communicate their problems, yet are unable to participate fully in learning and sports. Athletes also might try to hide their problems so that they can continue to play,” Busettoni said.

Knowing these mTBI biomarkers will enable investigators to provide a quantitative measure of recovery for a concussed patient. Currently, Busettoni says, both diagnosis and monitoring of mTBI recovery are hindered by the absence of reliable biomarkers.

“Standard CT and MRI tests often are negative, suggesting that symptoms may be the result of functional and metabolic neural alterations not well visualized with existing imaging technology. This makes it difficult to determine when there is an actual concussion and when a concussed child can safely ‘return to think’ and ‘return to play,’ as well as to quantitatively evaluate lingering effects,” Busettoni said. “Evidence suggests that new injuries on a still-recovering brain exponentially increase the possibility of long-term brain damage, making not only the detection of a concussion a critical factor, but the progress of its recovery, or lack thereof, as well. A comprehensive evaluation of vestibular and oculomotor alterations may therefore be the long-sought-after tool, due to their sensitivity and specificity.”

Jennifer Christy, Ph.D. in VORLab

The scientists’ search for mTBI biomarkers will be focused on developing, in a highly innovative approach, a comprehensive set of tests that range from pure physiological reflexes to cognitive functions. A group of 180 athletes ages 8-24 will be recruited from the UAB Sports Medicine Concussion Clinic at Children’s of Alabama. In addition, the VORLab is recruiting 60 participants without concussion, ages 19-49, to obtain a normative database. More information on the recruitment can be found on the laboratory Web pages.

“mTBI has a large spectrum of symptoms and issues depending on the brain areas affected by the hit. Our protocols will be tested and optimized on a large number of athletes to search for typical patterns of symptoms and to optimize the sensitivity and speed of the tests,” Busettoni said. “Our multifunctional approach, combined with standard functional and cognitive tests, will be the strength of our work.”

The VOR system of the participants in this study will be tested in a new, top-of-the-line system, an advanced high-torque, high-speed rotating chair for vestibular evaluation by Neuro-Kinetics Inc., which includes an integrated setup for visually driven oculomotor testing that will perform tests efficiently, accurately and fast, plus produce high-quality data.

“The high torque of this chair allows tests that cannot be performed with most clinical systems, such as simulating highly controlled and safe hits of the head,” Busettoni said. “Only a few major civilian and military centers have comparable systems.”

Other commercially available equipment and prototypes developed on the UAB campus also will round out the battery of tests to be completed in the VORLab to enable a comprehensive assessment of the vestibular, oculomotor, postural control and vision systems.

“The uniqueness of our facility is in the number of different tests that can be performed and, more important, the unique synergy between faculty of different departments and expertise,” Busettoni said. “The main aspect of our work will be better outcomes and optimization of the recovery times.”

Funding for this new laboratory came from the UAB Health Services Foundation in the amount of $175,000, with an additional $50,000 from various UAB centers and other UAB sources.

The VORLab is located on the ground floor of the Henry Peters Building, which houses the School of Optometry, easily accessible by patients from optometry, ophthalmology, and Children’s of Alabama, UAB and VA hospitals.

“I am truly enthusiastic that the School of Optometry will host this unique facility, supported by our exceptional UAB faculty, which will put our university as one of the top vestibular and oculomotor centers in the world,” said Kelly N. Nichols, O.D., Ph.D., MPH, FAAO, dean of the UAB School of Optometry.

Although its initial focus will be studying mild traumatic brain injuries in a research setting, the VORLab eventually will be structured as a UAB core facility for intramural or extramural use.
Alumni in Action

The UAB Department of PT held an alumni reception on Thursday, February 5 at Loughmiller’s Pub and Eatery in Indianapolis, IN. The event took place during the APTA Combined Sections Meeting. The Fall Alumni Reception will take place on August 15 in Birmingham in conjunction with the Fall conference of the Alabama Chapter of the APTA. More details later to come.
ALUMNI WEEKEND
MAY 15-16, 2015

Marilyn R. Gossman Endowed Lecture
Pamela Duncan, PT, PhD, DPT

Contemporary Issues in Physical Therapy Practice and Education Forum
June Clark, PT, DSc, MRA, Donald Leis, PT, PhD, and David Morris, PT, PhD

Physical Therapy Alumni Dinner

2015 ALUMNI WEEKEND

Marilyn R. Gossman Endowed Lecture
Pamela Duncan, PT, PhD, DPT
Professor of Neurology, Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center
Friday, May 15, 2015
5:30-7:00 p.m.
Heritage Hall, Room 104

Contemporary Issues in Physical Therapy Practice and Education Forum
June Clark, PT, DSc, MRA, Donald Leis, PT, PhD, and David Morris, PT, PhD
Saturday, May 16, 2015
2:00-4:00 p.m.
School of Health Professions Building, Room 224

Physical Therapy Alumni Dinner
Saturday, May 16, 2015
5:30-7:00 p.m.
UAB National Alumni Society House
Ticket required: $25.00 per person.