



OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

College of Health Sciences



Engaging Learners • Making Discoveries • Improving Health

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

From Sidelines to Success: Experience the Excitement of ODU's Athletic Training Program



The Master of Science in Athletic Training program at Old Dominion University goes beyond teaching the fundamentals of healthcare; it immerses students in real-world environments where they can apply and refine their skills in a variety of settings from clinics to professional sports. Tom Campbell, Director of Clinical Education, explains that the program's faculty actively engage with various healthcare and sports organizations to arrange placements that align with students' career aspirations. "Faculty reach out to sites to ask if they'd be willing to be a preceptor for students, then a contract is worked out," he notes, emphasizing the adaptability of placements that range from local clinics to national sports teams.

The program's nationwide scope allowed Zaynah Daley to pursue her passion for professional sports by securing a placement with the Dallas Wings, a WNBA team based in her desired location. This placement was not only geographically ideal for Daley but also provided her with a rich landscape of professional experiences. From managing athlete nutrition to working within team budgets, her role went beyond traditional athletic training tasks, encapsulating the multifaceted responsibilities that come with working in the high-energy world of professional sports.

Similarly, Taylor McCormick's experience with the Scranton Penguins provided her with hands-on responsibilities essential for any athletic trainer working in the high-stakes world of professional hockey. From preparing therapeutic baths to administering emergency care like suturing players during games, McCormick's clinical rotation was filled with invaluable learning moments that are only available in such thrilling sports settings.

Mentorship plays a crucial role in the program. Alumni like Kate Fitzgerald, now serving as a preceptor, provide guidance, helping students apply their knowledge in practical settings. "With the second-year students, I let them take the lead with evaluation and treatment and am there with them every step of the way to help if they get stuck," Fitzgerald explains. Her support not only bolsters students' confidence but also enhances their competence, ensuring they are well-prepared for their future careers.

ODU's program encourages students to engage in research, further enriching their educational journey. This integration of research and practical experience ensures that graduates are not just skilled practitioners but also contributors to the advancement of their field.

The program equips students with the technical skills needed for success and instills in them the values of resilience and lifelong learning. It teaches the importance of balancing professional demands with personal well-being—a lesson underscored by both Daley and McCormick as crucial for maintaining a sustainable career in athletic training.

As Old Dominion University continues to expand its facilities and strengthen its partnerships within the healthcare community, the College of Health Sciences remains committed to providing an educational foundation that empowers students to innovate and lead in the dynamic field of healthcare. The Athletic Training program at ODU not only prepares students for the challenges they will face in their careers but also inspires them to become the next generation of leaders in athletic training, making their mark in exciting environments like professional sports teams.

Celebrating Our Research Eras: ODU COHS Research Day 2024



On Friday, April 19, Old Dominion University's College of Health Sciences (COHS) held its annual Research Day to include oral and poster presentations from undergraduate, master's and doctoral students. The symposium showcased a wide array of research with 39 presentations, including 5 podium talks and 34 poster displays, from students across various degree levels: 7 undergraduate, 8 master's, 7 doctor of physical therapy, and 17 PhD students. This diversity not only highlighted the

depth of research being undertaken at ODU but also emphasized the university's commitment to fostering an interdisciplinary and inclusive academic environment.

The day concluded with compelling keynote speeches from Dr. Stacie Ringleb and Dr. Brittany Samulski, each representing different stages in their careers and offering unique insights into the lifecycle of a researcher. Dr. Ringleb, Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access and Professor in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, shared poignant stories from her career trajectory, emphasizing how personal challenges can intersect with professional achievements. She recounted a telling incident with a babysitter who thought engineering was too challenging and "for the boys," which spurred her to create the Ed+gineering program, mentoring young students in STEM. "Your personal life is going to impact your career, but you can still reach your goals," Dr. Ringleb advised, encapsulating the resilience required to navigate both realms.

Dr. Brittany Samulski's keynote creatively paralleled her academic journey with Taylor Swift's thematic eras, illustrating the evolution from foundational experiences to periods of bold exploration and significant collaborations. "Becoming a researcher is like becoming a pop star, right?" she quipped. From her initial "Fearless" beginnings to the collaborative "Red" era, she described her academic path with infectious enthusiasm, from her beginnings in clinical work to developing impactful community partnerships and innovative research projects.

This year's Research Day not only showcased the exceptional talents and rigorous inquiry of ODU's students and faculty but also reinforced the notion that we are all part of a broader, evolving "Research Era" at ODU, where every project and presentation contributes to the grand narrative of discovery and innovation at our university.

Reflecting on the day's achievements, it's evident that Old Dominion University's College of Health Sciences is a vibrant hub of scholarly activity, continuously evolving and pushing the boundaries of knowledge and practice in health sciences.

Class of 2024: Yahizkibel Vallenilla's Journey from Naval Service to a Dental Hygiene Degree



By Kenya Godette

After a journey spanning countries, decades and countless triumphs, Navy veteran and Ecuadorian immigrant Yahizkibel "Yahiz" Vallenilla is on the verge of a monumental moment: earning a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene from Old Dominion University, just a week after she turns 43.

"In about a month, I will be graduating. And I'm excited. I'm really excited about it!" she said.

But Vallenilla's achievements have not come without sacrifice, and as she prepares to don her cap and gown in just a few weeks, she remembers the ups and downs that brought her here.

Born in Ecuador and raised between Ecuador and Venezuela, she recalls travelling between family

members from the age of six to nine and attending seven schools over the course of six years.

"My parents separated when I was two years old," she said. "So, my mom decided to leave me with her sister and went to Venezuela to work."

When Vallenilla was 15, her mother returned to Ecuador in hopes of reuniting with her daughter full-time, only to discover her entire savings was gone.

"The government is not too honest over there," Vallenilla said. "So, they stole all the money from the banks. All the money my mom had worked for and saved for the future was gone."

"Many people migrated to find work because they had nothing left," she said – her mother was one of them. "Even though my mom was the youngest of her siblings, she tried to provide for everyone. She worked really hard."

Despite the circumstances, Vallenilla had big dreams of entering the dental field and at 19, she enrolled at Facultad Piloto de Odontología, a dental school in Ecuador. After graduating, she used her skills to help those in need, working with a group of classmates to provide free dental care to rural towns in the area.

"My intention was never to make money," she said. "Maybe because I've had so many ups and down in life, I thought that I could provide for others with my talents."

Vallenilla continues to pursue her passion of helping people, receiving the 2023 Sharon C. Stull Oral Health Community Impact Scholarship for her leadership and volunteer initiatives to increase oral health literacy in Hampton Roads.

"Despite all the ways in which Yahiz excelled in the dental hygiene program, nothing compares to the heart she put into serving the community," said Brenda Bradshaw, assistant professor in the College of Health Sciences. "She is well known for her innovative accomplishments and for serving the local Hispanic community."

As the recipient of this scholarship, Vallenilla worked with her mentor, Professor Adaira Howell, to organize a Latin Dental Access Day where they provided dental care and interpretation services to underserved individuals in Hispanic communities. Vallenilla also volunteered to help her classmates translate documents from English to Spanish.

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Updates on ODU-EVMS Integration



As Old Dominion University (ODU) and Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) edge closer to their integration on July 1, a series of forums have been pivotal in aligning and informing the respective communities about the upcoming changes. On April 30, ODU President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D., hosted a comprehensive forum open to all ODU students, faculty, and staff, fostering a broad discussion on the integration's scope and impact. The following day, a more targeted gathering was convened for the ODU College of Health Sciences faculty and staff, led by EVMS President Alfred Abuhamad, MD, who will soon serve as the Executive Vice President for Health Sciences.

These forums were instrumental in addressing the complexities and potential of merging two prominent institutions. Dr. Abuhamad passionately outlined the envisioned benefits, particularly emphasizing the opportunities for increased external investment and the potential to elevate the

research profile of the combined entity. "This integration was for the right reasons and leadership at both institutions are excited about this," he affirmed, signaling a robust foundation for the merger based on shared goals and mutual respect.

Addressing a critical issue, Dr. Abuhamad discussed how the integration is poised to significantly impact healthcare delivery in our community, particularly by addressing health disparities and combating the looming shortage of healthcare workers. "In order to address the health disparities in our community, community members need to see healthcare professionals that look like them," he explained, emphasizing the importance of diversity in healthcare. The integration aims to expand the healthcare workforce through enhanced training and education opportunities, mentorship programs, and a focus on community engagement.

Provost Austin Agho spoke to the importance of cultivating a unified academic culture, noting, "There are different cultures across different departments across campus, but we all share values." This reflection was key in addressing concerns about integrating diverse institutional cultures without diminishing their unique strengths.

Professor Stacie Raymer, chair of the Speech-Language Pathology programs, provided a reassuring perspective on the cultural transition, "Our college is the bridge and it's up to us to help with the culture and welcome EVMS." Her comments highlighted the proactive role the College of Health Sciences will play in facilitating a smooth integration.

Dr. Abuhamad also detailed practical steps being taken to merge academic and administrative functions effectively. He discussed initiatives like expanding interprofessional education, leveraging donor support for health sciences pathways, and enhancing mental health resources to support the well-being of students across both campuses.

As July 1 approaches, these forums underscore the importance of continued dialogue and engagement across ODU and EVMS. They not only serve to address immediate logistical concerns but also build a shared vision that leverages the strengths of both institutions to advance healthcare education and service in the community.

Recreational Therapy: Producing Forward-Focused Graduates through Experiential Learning



By Jenn Grimm with contributions by Shelly Beaver, Betsy Kennedy and Lanah Stafford

Our institution places a high value on enhancing the student learning experience through internships and other work-based learning opportunities. This dedication is underscored by ODU's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, titled "Forward-Focused: Where Innovation Meets Possibilities," which emphasizes the value of work-based learning experiences in three separate objectives across three different areas (Academic Excellence, Corporate/Community Partnerships and Economic Development, and Student Engagement and Success). As such, we wanted to shine a spotlight on one of many academic programs at ODU that has embraced the value of providing its students with a variety of work-based or

experiential learning opportunities - Recreational Therapy.

Formerly housed in the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, the Recreational Therapy (RT) program transitioned to the College of Health Sciences in summer 2023. This move has expanded the vast array of work-based learning opportunities being offered to the program's 60 current students.

[Click here to continue reading.](#)

ODU Students Featured in Amazon Prime's 'The College Tour' TV Series



By Kenya Godette

Old Dominion University has made history as the first and only institution in Virginia to participate in the award-winning Amazon Prime TV Series "The College Tour." On April 6 at 9 a.m. in the Big Blue Room at Chartway Arena, nearly 500 incoming ODU students along with faculty and staff gathered for a "blue" carpet event to view a private screening of ODU's episode.

Amazon Prime will release ODU's episode for public view on May 28 but the segment is currently available on ODU's website.

"The College Tour"—hosted and produced by "The Amazing Race" winner Alex Boylan—gives an inside look at what campus life is like at universities across the country and around the world. Chronicled through the eyes of current students, each episode captures everything from academics and housing to sports and career preparation. In fact, in ODU's episode, students delve into topics like Greek life, ODUGlobal and studying abroad.

The series has aired 150 episodes since its debut in 2020.

[Click here to continue reading.](#)

[Click here to watch the episode](#), which features Elham Alijanpour, Ph.D. student in Kinesiology and Rehabilitation.

Emily Hawkins, DPT, appointed as vice chair of the ACAPT Social Determinants of Health Task Force



ODU School of Rehabilitation Sciences' Emily Hawkins has been appointed as the Vice Chair of the ACAPT Task Force to integrate Social Determinants of Health (SDH) into physical therapy curriculums. This task force, consisting of twelve faculty members from across the U.S., is focused on enhancing how SDH are taught in response to new accreditation standards.

Their first step is to survey all DPT programs to assess current SDH teaching methods and support needed changes by 2026. This will better prepare students to address community and patient needs effectively.

Emily recently completed her dissertation on teaching SDH, uniquely positioning her to lead this important work. Her efforts not only advance her field but also highlight ODU's commitment to educational innovation and excellence.

At ODU, we empower our community to lead and innovate. Emily Hawkins' leadership in this national effort exemplifies the impactful roles our faculty and students play in advancing their professions.

ODU Speech-Language Pathology Students Awarded Norfolk Sertoma Club Scholarships



Congratulations to eight outstanding students from ODU's MS Speech-Language Pathology program, who were each awarded a \$1,000 scholarship by the Norfolk Sertoma Club. Recognized for their

academic excellence were Maggie Grimmett, Eve Wiebicke, Sydney Burson, Mimi Birthisel, Zabia Evans, Shatiera Walker, Jessica Gebert, and Casey Branson, pictured with program director Dr. Raymer, Sertoma Club president, and clinic director Ms. Chila Nicholson. Join us in celebrating their achievements and commitment to advancing health sciences.

Kinesiology & Rehabilitation Doctoral Students Shine at ODU GSGA Research Conference



The Old Dominion University Graduate Student Government Association Research Conference on April 4-5, was a showcase of exceptional graduate research. Kinesiology & Rehabilitation doctoral students Joel Harden and Taskina Akhter stood out with Joel receiving 3rd place for his oral presentation, Taskina winning 2nd place for her poster, and Elham Alijanpour earned 2nd place for her presentation, marking a triumphant day for the College of Health Sciences with three awards. Congratulations to these outstanding scholars!

The EVMS Fine Family Academy of Educators hosted 6th Annual Educational Scholarship Day



Eastern Virginia Medical School proudly hosted the 6th Annual Educational Scholarship Day on April 26, at Waitzer Hall, inviting faculty and students from Old Dominion University to participate. The day was filled with enriching activities, including [oral presentations](#), a keynote address by Eric Zwemer, MD, and an engaging poster session with networking opportunities. Among the notable participants was Emily Regan, alumna and adjunct faculty member in ODU's College of Health Sciences, who shared valuable insights in her talk titled "Strengthening Inter-rater Reliability of Cheiloscopy Examiners Through Training and Practice." This event underscored the collaborative spirit and educational excellence that EVMS and ODU jointly foster in the health sciences community.

Featured Photo: DPT Graduation Celebration



Recent Publications

[Allied Dental Students' Perceived Knowledge, Confidence, and Attitudes Regarding Disaster Victim Identification Topics](#)

Sam C. Vest, Brenda T. Bradshaw, Marsha A. Voelker, Ann M. Bruhn, Tara L. Newcomb and Sinjini

Sikdar

Disaster victim identification (DVI) service requires knowledge, confidence, and an attitude (KCA) of readiness. The purpose of this study was to assess allied dental students' perceived KCA regarding DVI skills and topics.

Call for Stories, Publications

The College of Health Sciences will be listing recent faculty publications. If you've published a paper this semester, [click here to share your publications](#).

Share your stories about:

- Research
- Grants
- Teaching success
- Awards and honors
- Student success
- Alumni success
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Students getting experience in the field
- Community service
- Upcoming events
- Anything else that shows how unique our programs are and how great it is to be a Monarch!
- If you are featured in the media, please share that as well.

Deadline to be featured in the next newsletter is August 15, but the "call for stories" is constant. Please share your story ideas with Erica Howell at ehowell@odu.edu.

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