

# Still

MAGAZINE

## There's no place like home

Finding your true calling





**A day of fun**

The annual Founder's Day celebration on the Mesa, Arizona, campus features fun and games for the whole family.

FEATURES

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**There's no place like home**

Students come to the University from many different pathways. Some take direct routes, while others follow winding journeys filled with twists and turns. ATSU, with its emphasis on compassion and adaptability in healthcare, embraces students from varied professional backgrounds and career experiences. While each student's path may have been different, their journeys reflect a shared determination to follow their hearts, find their true calling, and serve their communities.

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**Thank you, donors!**

During a special donor recognition ceremony coinciding with 2024 Founder's Day events, ATSU celebrates the Museum of Osteopathic Medicine surpassing its \$1 million fundraising goal and honors the Cleaver family, Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, and more.

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**Compassion and humanism in action**

The annual Founder's Day events transform ATSU's campuses into celebrations of community, tradition, and the unwavering spirit of students, alumni, faculty, and staff. This year, the University honored the legacy of its founder, while showing appreciation for the community carrying the legacy forward.

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**In search of a deeper meaning**

An ATSU-KCOM faculty member finds inspiration from students in her gross anatomy course, prompting her to develop an optional self-expression assignment. The surprising result leads to a diverse array of highly creative projects featured in two on-campus art exhibitions.

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**Faster, higher, stronger**

For a few weeks every few years, the greatest athletes in the world descend upon host nations, chasing medals and making memories at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. For ATSU's Doctor of Athletic Training program, four alumni attend the 2024 Summer Games to support athletes on medal-winning teams.

CONNECTIONS

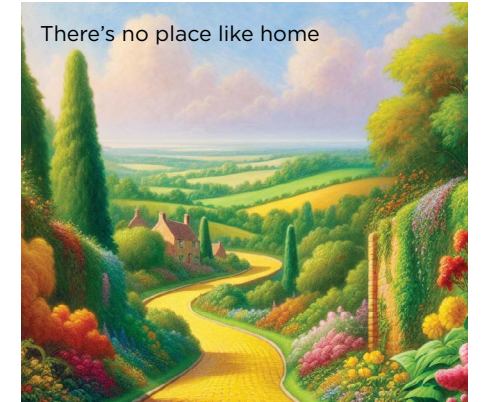
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ON THE COVER

Raven Lirio, OMS I, took a unique career path to ATSU-KCOM. Design by Lyle Lewton.



Jamie Balonier, OMS II, created this paper collage with ink for the self-reflection assignment in ATSU-KCOM's gross anatomy course. See more projects on Page 42.



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## ATSU named HEED Award recipient for eighth consecutive year

ATSU was named a recipient of the 2024 Health Professions Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award by *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine, the oldest and largest diversity-focused publication in higher education. ATSU was the first comprehensive health professions university to be named a HEED Award recipient in consecutive years (2017-18) and has now extended its achievement to an eighth consecutive year.

"We thank *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine for highlighting and recognizing important work being done at ATSU," said Chancellor Craig M. Phelps, DO, '84. "Congratulations to Clinton Normore, MBA, chief diversity officer, and his team on yet another honor celebrating their dedication and achievements."

"Zig Ziglar famously said, 'Success occurs when opportunity meets preparation.' For over 130 years, ATSU has been paving the way for exactly this kind of success," Normore said. "Thanks to the unwavering dedication of our Board of Trustees and the efforts of Stephanie McGrew, MHA, our program manager, opportunities like this are possible. ATSU is thrilled to be recognized among those making a difference, standing proud on the right side of history as we continue to lead with purpose and passion."

Please visit [atsu.edu/diversity](https://atsu.edu/diversity) to learn more about ATSU's diversity initiatives and resources.

# Still MAGAZINE

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ATSU MISSION  
A.T. Still University of Health Sciences serves as a learning-centered university dedicated to preparing highly competent professionals through innovative academic programs. The University is committed to continuing its osteopathic heritage and focus on whole person healthcare, scholarship, community health, interprofessional education, diversity, and underserved populations.

A.T. Still University (ATSU) schools/colleges:  
Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health (ATSU-ASDOH)  
Arizona School of Health Sciences (ATSU-ASHS)  
College of Graduate Health Studies (ATSU-CGHS)  
College for Healthy Communities (ATSU-CHC)  
Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (ATSU-KCOM)  
Missouri School of Dentistry & Oral Health (ATSU-MOSDOH)  
School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona (ATSU-SOMA)

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## From the chancellor



### Many pathways to ATSU

Since its founding in 1892, ATSU has deeply valued inclusion, opportunity, and transformation. Every year, we welcome remarkable students who have taken diverse paths to reach our physical and virtual doors. These paths are as varied as the students themselves, all united by their passion for healthcare and their commitment to making a difference.

More than a university, ATSU is a community of belonging. We celebrate the unique stories and life experiences our students bring with them, knowing they enrich the fabric of our institution. Here, every student is supported by a network of faculty, staff, and peers dedicated to their success. Our holistic approach ensures regardless of where students begin their journey, they will find the resources, mentorship, and encouragement to thrive.

As an institution founded on the tenets of osteopathic medicine, we understand the importance of treating the whole person. This philosophy extends beyond healthcare to the way we support our students. ATSU is a place where dreams are realized, second chances are embraced, and lifelong connections are formed.

To our alumni, we thank you for being an integral part of the University. Your continued support and involvement inspire our students and demonstrate the value of an ATSU education. Together, we are shaping the future of healthcare, one professional at a time.

Yours in service,

  
Craig M. Phelps, DO, '84  
ATSU Chancellor



ATSU Diversity & Inclusion hosted the 2024 Diversify Dentistry Youth Summit on Friday, Oct. 25, in partnership with nonprofit organization Diversity In Dentistry Mentorships Inc. Local middle and high school students from historically underrepresented groups visited ATSU's Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health, where they experienced a day in the life of a dentist and learned about the pathway to dental school.

Throughout the day, students were mentored by practicing dentists and dental students, participating in hands-on lessons about filling cavities and engaging in interactive discussions on dental anatomy and oral health. At lunch, students participated in a Q&A session with current students and dentists and, at the end of the day, were honored in their own white coat ceremony.

"Open your minds to all of the opportunity and excitement that's in front of you," said Clinton Normore, MBA, chief diversity officer, ATSU. "The beauty of the work that these folks do all the time is not just to prepare you for dentistry, it's to prepare you to get out of high school, to get into college, and to ultimately have success beyond that."

According to the American Dental Association, around 5% of dentists in the U.S. are Hispanic, fewer than 4% are Black, and less than 1% are Native American. This underrepresentation of minority populations in dentistry leads to inequitable oral healthcare and bias within the industry. Diversity in Dentistry Mentorships is dedicated to strengthening the diversity pipeline from middle school to dental school and diversifying the dental applicant pool with qualified and competitive candidates.



Local middle and high school students participate in hands-on lab activities and a white coat ceremony.

# A day in the life of a dentist

ATSU hosts 2024 Diversify Dentistry Youth Summit for local students

By Haley Lorenzen





# FEATURES



## Shape the future of healthcare

For over 25 years, A.T. Still University's College of Graduate Health Studies (ATSU-CGHS) has developed a legacy delivering online graduate-level education across the globe.

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Sara Funk, DPT, an assistant professor of anatomy at ATSU's Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, recognized the creative potential and learning style of students in her gross anatomy course. She then implemented an optional assignment for her students to reflect on their dissection experiences and express themselves creatively, featured on Pages 42-47. Her innovative teaching methods led to being named recipient of the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Innovation in Teaching for Learning Award.

"Not only are they learning anatomy from the donor bodies, but they are learning respect and professionalism and dignity for the human body and for humankind," Dr. Funk says. "It was a reminder of the fact that all of their hard work is for the patient, for the patient experience."

### IN THIS SECTION

There's no place like home

Thank you, donors!

Founder's Day 2024

A deeper meaning

Faster, higher, stronger

\* ATSU alumni who implement the 20% tuition discount are encouraged to contact a tax professional regarding any tax implications. All discounts are independent and cannot be combined with any other offers.

# There's no place like home

Students from unique career backgrounds share how they discovered their true calling and found ATSU

By Katie Hubbard and Arselia Gales

Every healthcare career starts somewhere. Some ATSU students come to the University on a direct path, while others follow a winding journey filled with twists and turns. ATSU, with its emphasis on compassion and adaptability in healthcare, embraces students from varied professional backgrounds and career experiences. These individuals serve as inspiration for their peers and others who may follow in their footsteps, and their broad perspectives and unique skills enrich the University's collaborative learning environment. Although each student's path may have been different, their journeys reflect a shared determination to follow their hearts and serve their communities.

## Before ATSU, I was an athletic trainer and massage therapist.

*Breana Miller, MS, fourth-year medical student at ATSU's School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona (ATSU-SOMA)*

Breana Miller's path to osteopathic medicine has been shaped by a deep passion for health, healing, and personal growth.

Her journey began with a focus on athletic training, where she gained hands-on experience working with athletic trainers, orthopedic surgeons, and sports medicine physicians. This exposure sparked an interest in the human body, prompting her to pursue a master's degree in anatomy and cell biology. During this time, she worked as a massage therapist and as an athletic trainer, blending clinical and therapeutic practices.

As a massage therapist and athletic trainer, Miller found herself limited in the scope of treatments she could offer, which led her to seek a career with various patient management opportunities. This desire to provide comprehensive care ultimately led her to pursue osteopathic medicine.

"I found myself longing for a career where I could provide a broader spectrum of care and continue making a difference in people's lives," she says.

The transition to medical school was not without challenges. As a first-generation medical student, Miller often felt lost and struggled with preparing for the MCAT. Despite these obstacles, her determination never wavered. After a setback with her first MCAT attempt, she persevered and was accepted into ATSU-SOMA, confident her journey had only just begun.

Now, as she looks ahead to residency, Miller is focused on specializing in sports medicine and further developing her skills as an osteopathic physician.

"Looking back, I'm confident that each step has brought me closer to my ultimate goal of being able to offer more comprehensive, holistic care to those who need it most," Miller says.

**"I can confidently say I have no regrets."**







## Before ATSU, I was in the Marine Corps.

*Donald L. Bird III, first-year medical student at ATSU's Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (ATSU-KCOM)*

For Donald Bird, his dream career was always to be a physician. But after having some troubles in life and college, he changed his direction and joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 2018. He spent four years as a forward observer, using his time in the military to center himself. He was stationed with 2nd Battalion 10th Marines in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and in February 2020, was deployed to Okinawa, Japan, in support of 1st Battalion 6th Marines.

**“Medicine has always been my end goal.”**

“When I first joined the Marine Corps, I questioned whether I wanted to be in medicine for myself or because other people expected it out of me,” Bird says. “However, I continuously yearned to be back in school, and learning about medicine was the only thing that truly made me happy.”

After his honorable discharge, he used the GI Bill to pay for his last two years of college and started working as a medical registrar. Being in a healthcare environment and talking with physicians cemented his dream as his own.

“Upon returning to school, it was difficult to readjust to life outside of the military,” Bird says. “My life had lost a lot of structure, and I was intimidated that my knowledge base would not return to me after spending so much time doing something else.”

After completing his bachelor’s degree in biochemistry, Bird is now attending ATSU-KCOM and living his dream. Following graduation, he will be commissioned into the U.S. Navy on active duty with the hopes of matching into a Navy orthopedic surgery residency.

“I am relieved I was wrong about myself,” he says. “I am extremely proud of myself, as are my wife and parents.”



## Before ATSU, I was a teacher.

*Melanie Bemis, first-year dental student at ATSU's Missouri School of Dentistry & Oral Health (ATSU-MOSDOH)*

For 16 years, Melanie Bemis taught middle school and high school science classes, as well as the gifted and talented program, in her rural Idaho community. She went into teaching at the encouragement of her mother, but with a lifelong love of science and health, her true aspiration was to become a health professional. She finally decided to change careers in 2019 with the goal of starting dental school when her youngest child would be entering college in 2023.

"It's really hard to give up a job that is fulfilling much of the time, to leave your family and loved ones, even if temporarily, to go pursue something completely new," says Bemis. "But, there isn't a day that goes by that I wake up wishing I was doing anything else."

She encountered many hurdles before her acceptance to ATSU-MOSDOH. She worked full-time while taking care of a home and two teenagers, completing prerequisites, and studying for the Dental Admission Test, not to mention several dental school admissions officers telling her she was too old to apply and it would be too hard for her to succeed.

"I was drawn to ATSU because their admissions officer treated me like an individual, like a human being, and did not close a lid on my potential," Bemis says. "I am grateful to have been accepted here. Additionally, I am really blessed to have very supportive children and family, a life partner, and friends who have continuously encouraged me and believed in me."

**"There isn't a day that goes by that I wake up wishing I was doing anything else."**



## Before ATSU, I was a public health student.

*Chidalu Mbonu, MPH, first-year student in the Central Coast Physician Assistant program at ATSU's College for Healthy Communities*

When Chidalu Mbonu reflects on her journey to ATSU, she says she didn't change paths - her path became clearer.

"As is common for many children, my career choices varied at different times in my life. In high school, I was on the path to becoming a civil engineer. In community college, I was a biology major/undecided before finding my passion and calling in public health," she says. "However, in all my choices, there was a constant: the desire to be of service to my neighbor and improve the lives of those around me, including individuals who are low income or living with disabilities."

Mbonu aspired to be an accessible public health practitioner, and she believed becoming a clinician would help her achieve this goal. In her hometown of Lagos, Nigeria, Mbonu says the PA profession is largely unknown. She first discovered it while volunteering at the local fire department near her alma mater.

Mbonu decided to become a PA during her final year of college amid the COVID-19 pandemic, realizing the PA profession's generalist medical education aligned better with her

vision of serving where she's most needed. Although her journey to ATSU was filled with challenges, she viewed these obstacles as blessings, helping prepare her to be the best public health PA she could be.

**"Becoming a PA  
was always the  
journey I was  
supposed to  
embark on."**





## Before ATSU, I was a dental lab technician and phlebotomist.

*Gabriel Roye, fourth-year dental student at ATSU's Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health (ATSU-ASDOH)*

Before enrolling at ATSU-ASDOH, Gabriel Roye worked as both a dental lab technician and a phlebotomist, careers providing him with hands-on experience in healthcare but not fully satisfying his desire to connect with patients.

“As a dental lab technician, I was restoring smiles on computers and never really saw the fruits of my labor,” Roye says. “I just hoped one day I would get to see my work impact the lives of patients I cared for.”

The transition to dentistry wasn't easy, though. Working as a phlebotomist during the COVID-19 pandemic, he often found himself drawing blood in the middle of the night for minimum wage. During this time, he prayed his dream of becoming a dentist would one day become a reality, even when it felt out of reach.

**“True satisfaction comes from serving others.”**

“It was a grueling job,” Roye says. “This experience taught me patience and endurance. I learned in order to lead others and fulfill your life's calling, you must first be willing to humble yourself and serve others.”

Looking back, Roye believes his decision to pursue dentistry was guided by a higher power.

“It was all God and none of me,” he says. “Making the decision to submit my life to something greater than myself was the best decision I could have ever made.”

Now, as he approaches graduation, Roye plans to return to the Southeastern U.S., where he hopes to open his own practice and serve underserved communities. He also plans to continue his work with Operation Renewed Hope, providing dental care to remote areas in need.





## Before ATSU, I was a clinical research coordinator.

*Rosanna Holod, first-year student in the Central Coast Physician Assistant program at ATSU's College for Healthy Communities*

Rosanna Holod always dreamed of going to medical school, but she had never considered becoming a physician assistant (PA). After graduating in 2020 with a bachelor of science degree in biology, she began working as a clinical research coordinator.

Holod had the privilege of working alongside many inspiring physicians, nurse practitioners, and PAs who shared their “why” with her. That’s when she realized becoming a PA was her true calling.

**“I had to work so hard to prove to the world this was the path I wanted.”**

“It almost seemed crazy that I never knew this career option existed, especially with how perfectly the purpose of our career fit my ‘why,’” Holod says.

Coming from an immigrant family, she experienced life through a unique lens, where health was always considered life’s true wealth. Despite having limited financial resources, she learned good health and family were the most important things in life.

Holod began applying to PA programs in 2021, facing more than 40 rejections before finally receiving an acceptance from ATSU in 2024. As a low-GPA applicant, she worked tirelessly to prove her commitment to the profession. She credits ATSU for recognizing her potential, saying the program’s holistic review process made her feel truly seen.

“As each day goes by, I know 100% I’ve made the right decision,” she says.

After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in family medicine and primary care, a specialty she is passionate about and believes is crucial for overall health.



## Before ATSU, I was a teacher in the United Kingdom.

*Reis O'Neill, student in the Master of Science in Occupational Therapy program at ATSU's Arizona School of Health Sciences*

Reis O'Neill's path to ATSU was anything but direct. Originally from the United Kingdom, O'Neill started out teaching history and physical education to grades 7-12. He also worked as a manual laborer and a movie and TV extra. His career path, he says, was unclear until two years ago.

His wife, who he met 10 years ago in college, enrolled in ATSU's Physician Assistant Studies program, while O'Neill stayed behind in the U.K., initially pursuing teaching as a way to move to the U.S. However, after the revocation of a visa option in 2018, he moved to Nanjing, China, in 2019 to teach English while navigating the green card process, which he completed in 2021.

Upon arriving in the U.S., O'Neill began working as a technician at an outpatient rehabilitation clinic in Ahwatukee, Arizona. There, he discovered his deep interest in rehabilitation, particularly hand therapy, which aligned with his background in education and physical activity. This led him to pursue ATSU's Occupational Therapy program.

"I thought the process would be simple, but with my degrees being from overseas, it was an arduous process," he says. "Ultimately, I had to work an additional year as a technician while completing a total of 10 accelerated prerequisite classes to allow me to apply for the next student cycle."

Now, O'Neill has successfully navigated these obstacles. After he graduates in June 2025, he plans to specialize in hand therapy and become a certified hand therapist.

"At times I envy those who knew what they wanted to pursue right out of college, but I am so grateful for the experiences I've had leading up to this moment," O'Neill says.

**"I am very ready to enjoy what I do every day."**





## Before ATSU, I was a freelance voice actor.

*Raven Lirio, first-year medical student at ATSU's Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (ATSU-KCOM)*

As an avid fan of video games and cartoons, Raven Lirio would often watch YouTube videos of her favorite shows and games. That's how she stumbled upon the world of home voice-over and was inspired to pursue it as a hobby in 2014. By 2019, it had turned into a freelance career and became her full-time side hustle as she completed her undergraduate degree.

**“Acting was something I fell into accidentally.”**

“I had been interested in the field of medicine since I was quite young, but being in a creative field expanded my horizons and inspired me in ways I never expected,” Lirio says. “Through working with various clients, I learned how to build rapport and maintain relationships, similar to how physicians do the same with their patients. I was also able to use my experience in medicine to further my voice-over career by assisting in medical narration for the various practices I worked for.”

Additionally, voice-over led her to the communications field, where she shot documentaries and met people around the world. These experiences exposed her to daily life and hardships faced in diverse communities, deepening her cultural perspectives and shaping her as a future physician. While Lirio has since shifted her focus to her studies at ATSU-KCOM, she envisions combining her creative and medical background to better reach underserved communities and improve healthcare literacy and education, ultimately enhancing patient-centered care.

“I feel my experiences in voice-over led to me being a better communicator and will assist me in helping patients feel heard,” she says. “I look forward to bringing my unique perspective to the patients I serve.”



## Before ATSU, I was in the U.S. Air Force and a police officer.

*David Orr, first-year student in the Online Doctor of Athletic Training program at ATSU's Arizona School of Health Sciences (ATSU-ASHS)*

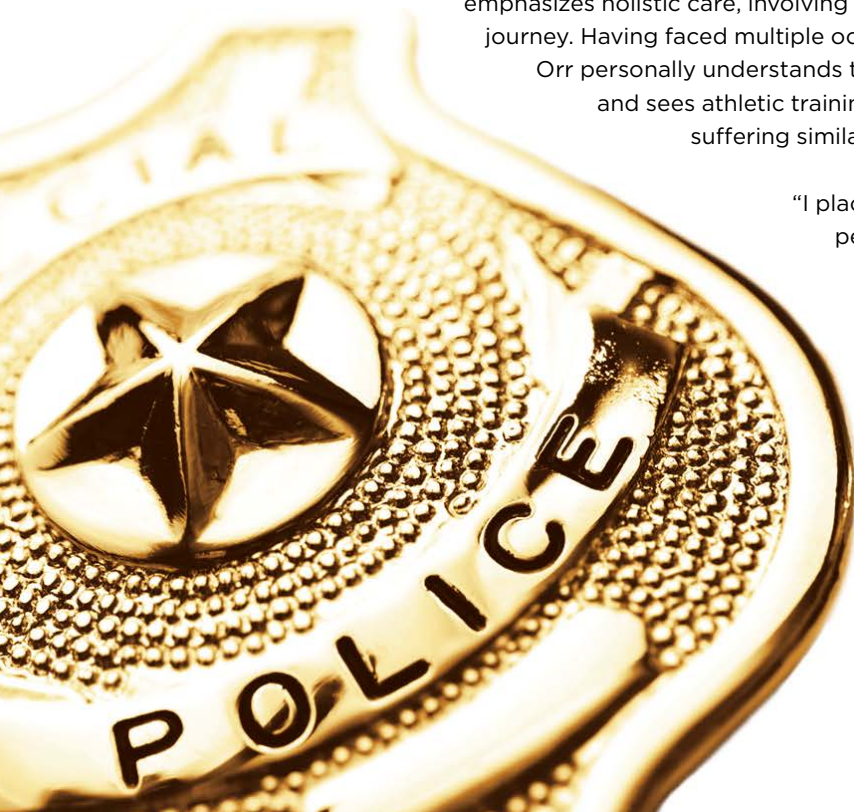
David Orr's career journey reflects a deep commitment to healthcare, fitness, and service to others. After enlisting in the U.S. Air Force in 1982 as a canine handler in law enforcement, Orr transitioned to the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, where he served until retiring in 2011. His passion for health and well-being, long an interest but not fully explored during his law enforcement career, became his new focus.

Before enrolling in ATSU-ASHS' online Doctor of Athletic Training program in spring 2024, he earned his associate's degree in culinary arts in 2012, a bachelor of science degree in athletic training in 2017, and a master of science degree in sports performance training in 2023. Orr currently serves as a firefighter and advanced EMT with the Clark County Fire Department in Las Vegas.

Orr's extensive experience as an athletic trainer includes work in secondary schools, in occupational settings, in the military, and with individual athletes. His approach emphasizes holistic care, involving patients in every step of their healthcare journey. Having faced multiple occupational injuries throughout his career, Orr personally understands the importance of proper rehabilitation and sees athletic training as a way to prevent others from suffering similar setbacks.

"I place a great deal of emphasis on the whole person model of healthcare, involving the person in all healthcare and sports performance decisions," he says. "I believe each person should determine their own goals and choose the path to achieve those goals."

**"I've been interested in health and well-being for many decades but did not have the time to learn about it in-depth."**







## Before ATSU, I was a senior clinical trial assistant.

*Dimitri Mahee, fourth-year dental student at ATSU's Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health (ATSU-ASDOH)*

Although Dimitri Mahee enjoyed his fulfilling career in clinical research and contributing to approval of drugs through the Food and Drug Administration, he always felt a deeper calling to dentistry.

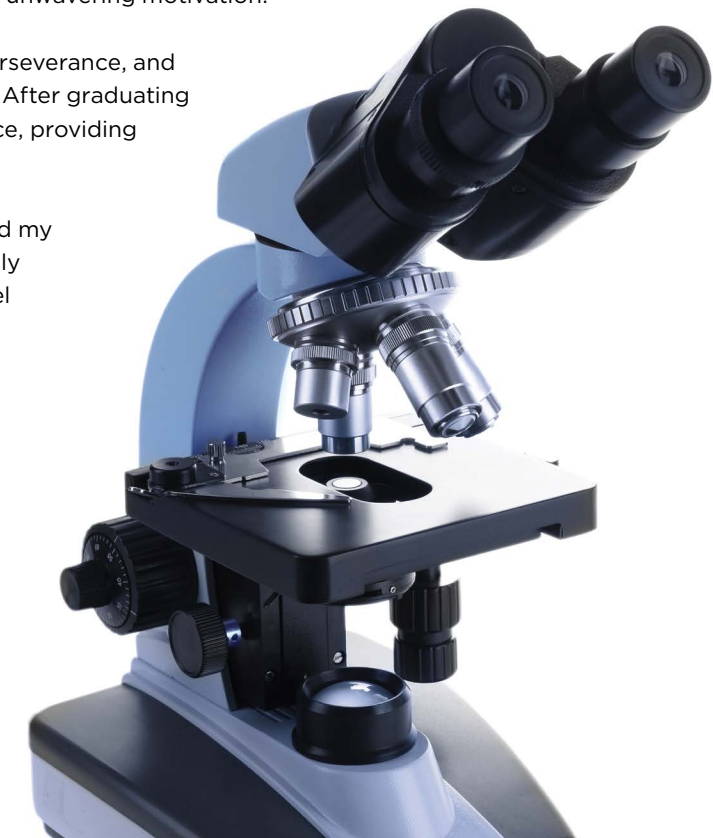
**“If given the chance, I would make this decision a thousand times over.”**

His interest in dentistry was first sparked in high school during a conversation with his father. He was initially drawn to architecture and engineering, but a psychology course at Northeastern State University in 2012 made him reconsider dentistry. After taking a personality test suggesting dentistry as a career path, Mahee realized it was his true calling.

Returning to school after a five-year hiatus was a challenge, but Mahee pressed on. After his first attempt at the Dental Admission Test (DAT) in 2015 was unsuccessful, he retook it in 2020. His efforts paid off when he received conditional acceptance to ATSU-ASDOH, contingent on a higher DAT score. Before even knowing if he was successful, he and his family had prepared to move nearly 1,200 miles from Kansas City, Missouri, to Gilbert, Arizona. Throughout the difficult transition, his wife, children, and faith were his unwavering motivation.

Mahee's journey has been one of faith, growth, and perseverance, and looking back, he is certain he made the right decision. After graduating in May 2025, he plans to serve the Indian Health Service, providing dental care to American Indian communities.

“Rejection was part of the process, but it never defined my path – progress and perseverance did,” he says. “I firmly believe that nothing happens by coincidence, and I feel incredibly blessed to be where I am today.”



## Before ATSU, I was a business leader.

*Tami Fife, MHS, doctor of health administration student at ATSU's College of Graduate Health Studies*

For more than 20 years, Tami Fife worked at Hewlett-Packard (HP) in roles across marketing, business, and product development. As her career progressed, she began to feel a strong desire to make a meaningful impact in her community. She decided to pursue a master's degree in health science, uncertain where it would lead.

In her final years at HP, she was a leader in the healthcare business segment. She was exploring ways to become more involved in healthcare when a friend introduced her to a volunteer committee at Terry Reilly Health Services, a community health center (CHC). This experience quickly evolved into an unpaid consultancy role, where she helped the CEO develop marketing strategies in her spare time.

She eventually left HP and the information technology field in 2014 to join Terry Reilly Health Services, where she now serves as chief operating officer and chief information officer (CIO).


"My CHC is the largest federally qualified health center in Idaho," Fife says. "As it continues to grow, I recognize the importance of developing my skills to keep pace and to grow as a leader."

**"I was attempting to manage change in healthcare, but now, I am preparing to lead that change."**

Fife never imagined pursuing a doctorate later in her career or returning to the IT field as a CIO. However, she understood the only constant in healthcare is change. She enrolled in ATSU's Doctor of Health Sciences program to navigate growth and change, and ultimately become a better leader and mentor.

"I feel as if I've come full circle," she says, "and this time, I'm standing a little taller, fully aware that my efforts are making a meaningful difference." ■





ATSU's Museum of Osteopathic Medicine surpasses \$1 million in gifts, celebrates the Cleaver family, Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, and more

By Katie Hubbard

THANK  
YOU, donors!

During a special donor recognition ceremony on Friday, Oct. 18, ATSU celebrated the Museum of Osteopathic Medicine surpassing its \$1 million fundraising goal, which began in October 2022. The event coincided with the annual Founder's Day celebration on the Kirksville, Missouri, campus, bringing together dozens of ATSU community members and friends, including the ATSU Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and administration.

ATSU Chief Advancement Officer Robert Behnen, MBA, welcomed and introduced guests, and Chancellor Craig M. Phelps, DO, '84, delivered opening remarks and thanked those in attendance. As Dr. Phelps spoke to the audience, he recalled two years ago when the Museum of Osteopathic Medicine celebrated its accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums. It was at that celebration, alumni and friends were encouraged to support the museum through charitable gifts. Since that time, the museum has received generous contributions from 122 donors.

"Our alumni, our friends, and others have donated over \$1 million dollars to help the museum be sustainable," Dr. Phelps said. "Having sustainability means we can do more for the community, we can bring more people to this area. They can learn about the history of osteopathy, and they come from around the world."

One of the event highlights included recognition of Lloyd Cleaver, DO, '76, and his family for their six-figure donation to establish the Cleaver Family Endowment for the museum. In honor of the family's generosity, the museum's main gallery foyer was officially named the Cleaver Family Foyer.

"Funding this endowment is a decision we made out of gratitude for the medical career I have been privileged to pursue and the osteopathic education I received at ATSU-KCOM, the founding school of osteopathic medicine and home to the Museum of Osteopathic Medicine," said Dr. Cleaver, who was joined by his family at the ceremony. "It is a privilege I share with my sons, David Cleaver, DO, '06; Jonathan Cleaver, DO, '08; and Nathan Cleaver, DO, '10, who also chose to pursue this noble profession and attain their osteopathic medical education at ATSU."

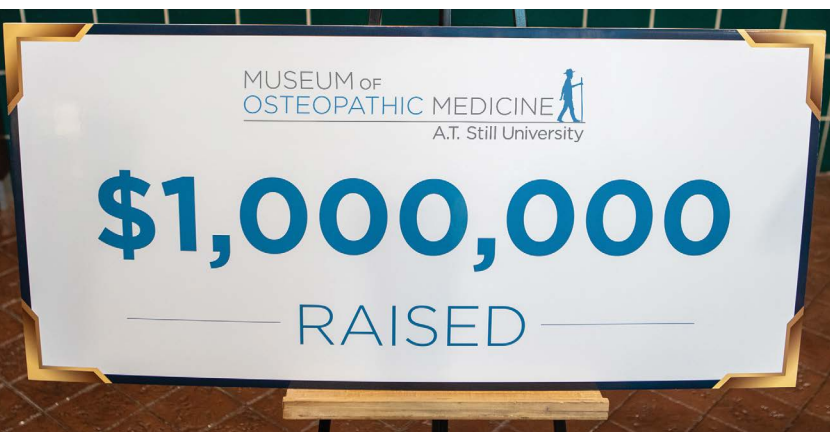
Additionally, Dr. Lloyd Cleaver was thanked for sharing his story of charitable giving through a museum fundraising appeal. That appeal sparked a wave of generosity from additional donors and raised more than \$36,000 for the Museum of Osteopathic Medicine.

Following the Cleaver family's recognition, Chris Paynter, DO, president of the Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons (MAOPS) Board of Trustees, announced a \$100,000 gift commitment from the organization, which will establish the MAOPS Gallery Hall. The establishment of the hall will expand the museum's exhibition space leading from Heritage Hall to the newly created Synapse Lounge.

In addition to honoring the Cleaver family and MAOPS, John Drabing, DO, '61, was recognized for contributing the final gift of nearly \$50,000 to push the campaign past its \$1 million fundraising goal. Dr. Drabing was unable to attend the ceremony, but his support was noticed by all in attendance as the event culminated with a drumroll and balloon drop.

Throughout the course of the campaign, charitable donations have comprised gifts of all sizes. Some of those gifts included Elsie Gaber, PhD, and Rob Gaber, DHL (hon.), '12, naming Elsie's Medicinal Garden, which was recognized as part of the accreditation celebration at Founder's Day 2022. More recently, Sydney P. Ross, DO, '59, designated funds to establish the Fred and Julia Ross, RN, Endowment for the Museum of Osteopathic Medicine and to name one of the window exhibit spaces in Heritage Hall. The endowment and naming of the window exhibit space are in memory of his parents.

Following the ceremony, attendees gathered for a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Cleaver Family Foyer and a reception in the museum's main gallery.

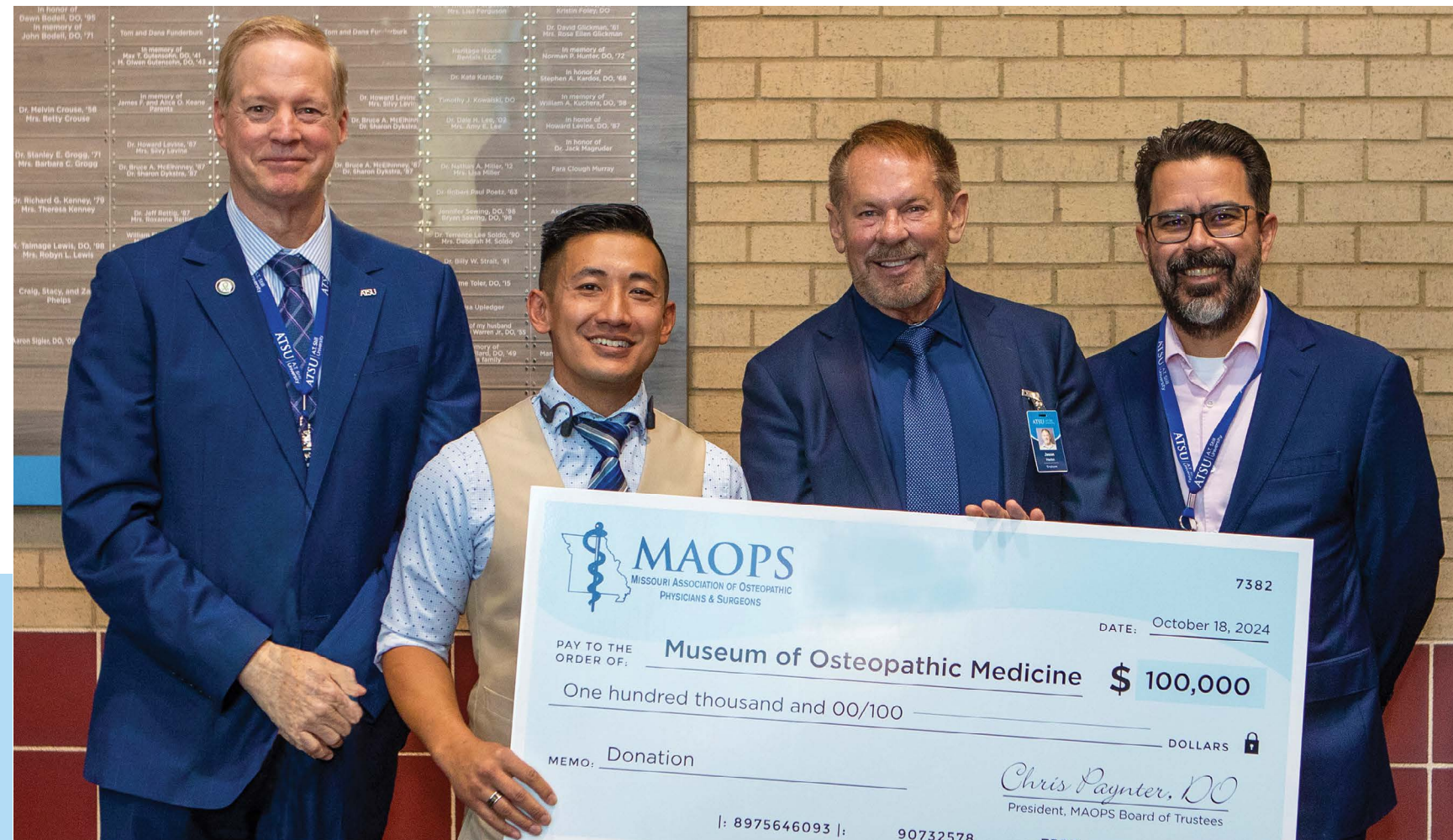


All the names mentioned here are listed on the Wall of Honor at the Museum of Osteopathic Medicine. Spaces on the wall are still available to commemorate those who have represented and supported osteopathic medicine. To recognize a person or organization special to you, please contact Brad Chambers, director of development, at [bradchambers@atsu.edu](mailto:bradchambers@atsu.edu) or 660.626.2180, or visit [giving.atstu.edu/honor-wall](https://giving.atstu.edu/honor-wall) to donate online.



Above (left to right): Dr. Nathan Cleaver, '10; Dr. Lloyd Cleaver, '76; Mrs. Lloyd Cleaver; Dr. Jonathan Cleaver, '08; and Dr. David Cleaver, '06, celebrate the naming of the Cleaver Family Foyer.

Below (left to right): Dr. Craig Phelps; Dr. Chris Paynter; Jason Haxton, MA, museum director; and Isaac Navarro, DMD, MPH, '08, chair, ATSU Board of Trustees, celebrate MAOPS' \$100,000 gift commitment to establish the MAOPS Gallery Hall.



# Compassion and humanism in action

The ATSU community gathers for 2024 Founder's Day celebration

By Katie Hubbard



The annual Founder's Day events transform ATSU's campuses into celebrations of community, tradition, and the unwavering spirit of students, alumni, faculty, and staff. This year, the home of osteopathic medicine honored the legacy of its founder, A.T. Still, DO, while showing appreciation for the University community carrying the legacy forward. The multiweek event was filled with connection, camaraderie, and even some friendly competition. As alumni reunited with classmates and students joined in time-honored activities, Founder's Day proved once again why it's a cornerstone of the University's culture.

To kick off the celebration on Thursday, Oct. 17, Margaret Wilson, DO, '82, dean of ATSU's Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (ATSU-KCOM), welcomed guests to the annual Fred C. Tinning, PhD, DOEd (hon.), '14, Founder's Day Osteopathy Lecture, delivered by Richard W. Koss, DO, C-SPOMM, ACOFP, '82. Dr. Wilson thanked all in attendance who came from around the world to join in the festivities.

"Osteopathic medicine is growing by leaps and bounds, and there's a reason for that," Dr. Wilson said. "It's because of the quality and the success of our grads and many others that have served the needs of patients across our country and across the world."

Dr. Wilson also paused for a moment of silence in remembrance of Flight 5966. 2024 marked the 20th anniversary of the crash that claimed the lives of 13 people traveling to Kirksville, Missouri, six of whom were part of ATSU-KCOM's regional clinical teams. The two crash survivors were John Krogh, PhD, and Wendy Bonham, who were part of ATSU-KCOM's Utah team.

"Today, we want to remember those who lost their lives and those who survived and have lived with the tragedy," Dr. Wilson said. "As we remember them, just remember what they were coming here to celebrate: compassion and humanism in medicine, and let's carry that on into the future."

Compassion and humanism are inherent qualities of ATSU students and graduates, and these qualities were on full display throughout the Founder's Day celebration. From the Tinning lecture and alumni reunions to Still-A-Bratton and the women's flag football games, the ATSU community rekindled old friendships, made new memories, and showed their support for the University's enduring mission. ■



## Women's flag football games

**Arizona campus (left):** Throughout the week, teams on the Mesa, Arizona, campus competed for the flag football title. The championship game was held between Occupational Therapy/Speech-Language Pathology/Audiology (OT/SLP/AUD) and Physician Assistant Studies (PA). In a dramatic finish, OT/SLP/AUD made a pick six in overtime to win the game with a final score of 12-6. The OT/SLP/AUD team also won the spirit stick for the second consecutive year.

**Missouri campus (above):** First- and second-year students from ATSU's Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine and Missouri School of Dentistry & Oral Health battled for the title and bragging rights during the annual flag football game held on the field behind the Thompson Campus Center. The second-year students triumphed over the first-year students, 28-6.



**Reunion Banquet and Alumni Recognition Ceremony**

Gold Medallion members from the class of 1974 celebrated their 50th anniversary. Members in attendance were (front row, left to right) Jean Bitza, spouse of the late Ronald J. Bitza, DO; Hugh Schuetz, DO; James Thomson, DO; Raymond Easley, DO; (back row, left to right) John Sparks, DO; James Suchsland, DO; Jack Roseberry, DO; David Hull, DO; and James Keith, DO.



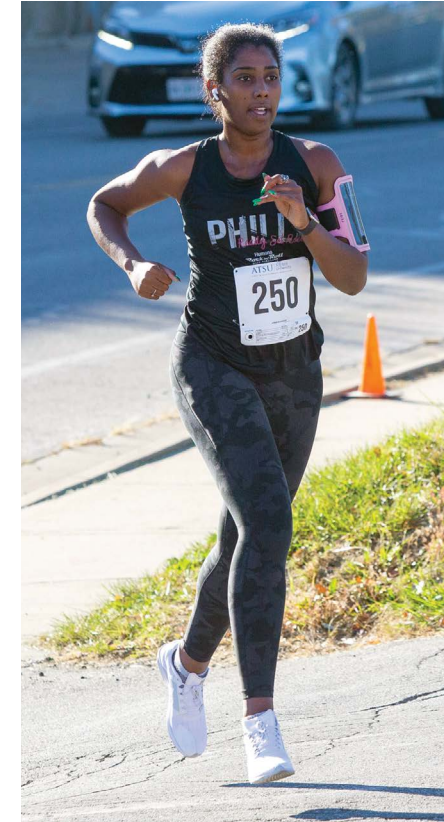
**ATSU-College of Graduate Health Studies (ATSU-CGHS) luncheon**

A special luncheon was held for alumni, faculty, staff, and students on the Missouri campus to celebrate all ATSU-CGHS graduates and honor the Missouri Public Health Workforce grant recipients.



**Museum of Osteopathic Medicine dedication and reception**

ATSU celebrated the Cleaver family and MAOPS with a special donor recognition ceremony, and the museum announced it had surpassed its \$1 million fundraising goal. Read more about the event on Page 34.



**Still-A-Bratton**

Following the women's flag football game, the University joined for fun, food, and activities at the Thompson Campus Center. The evening included food trucks and catered dinner, live music, and a bonfire with s'mores.

**Founder's Day 5k run/1.25-mile walk**

With runners from multiple campuses, Arselia Gales, content editor, communication & marketing, Arizona campus, took first place in the women's 30-39 age division.



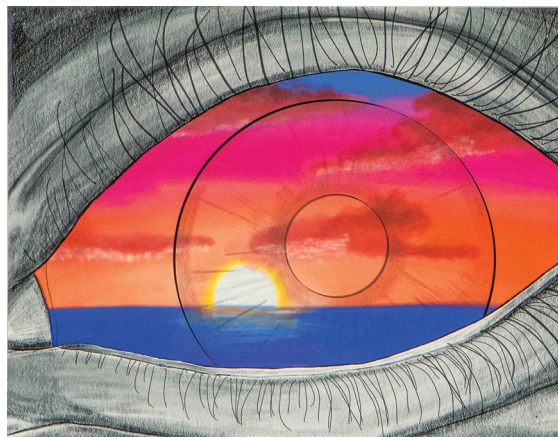
**Arizona campus celebration**

ATSU faculty, staff, and students on the Arizona campus celebrated Founder's Day with food and festivities, including a petting zoo, rock climbing wall, photo booth, dunk tank, carnival games, bounce houses, and more.

# In search of a deeper meaning

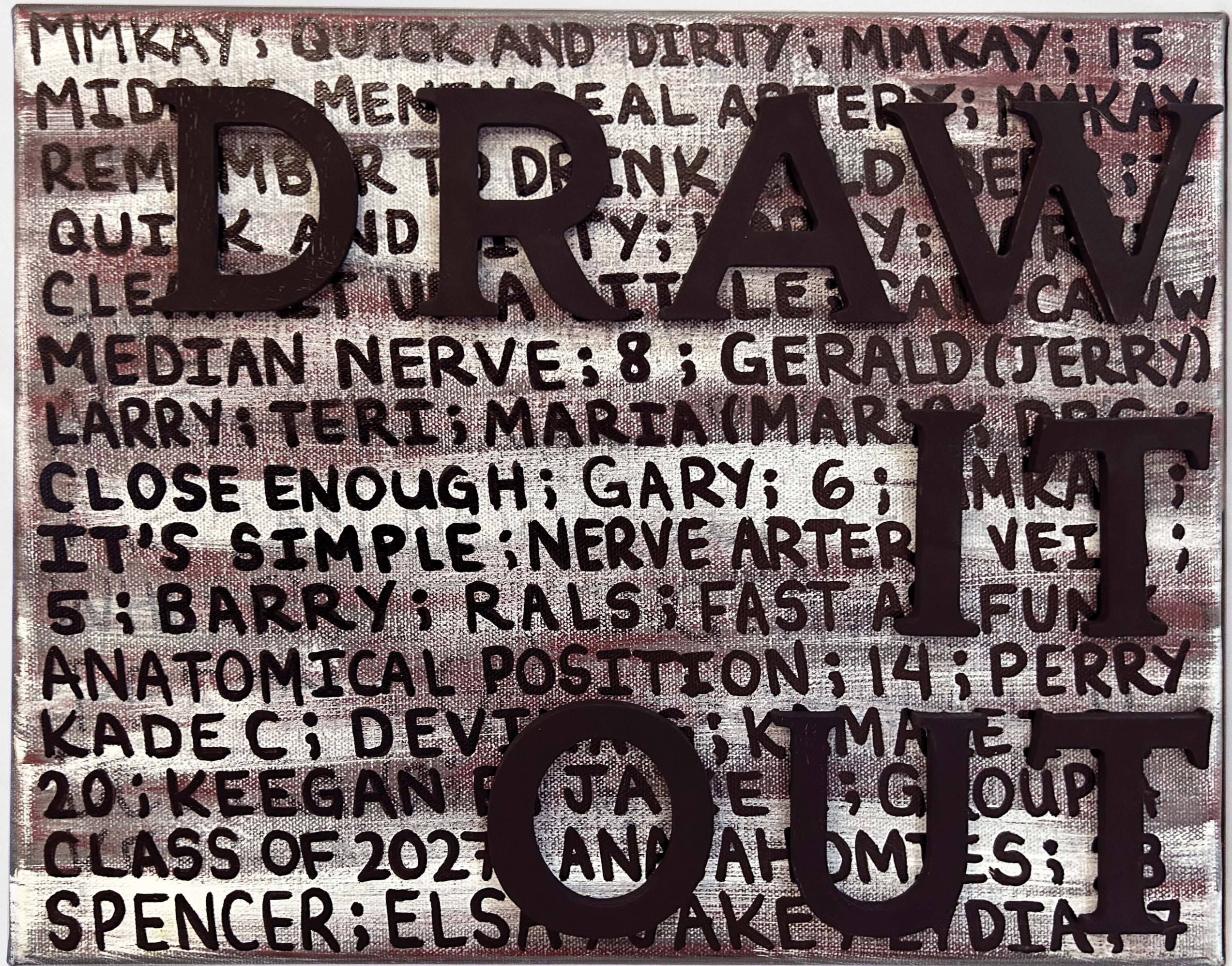
ATSU-KCOM students use self-expression to reflect on anatomy and dissection experiences

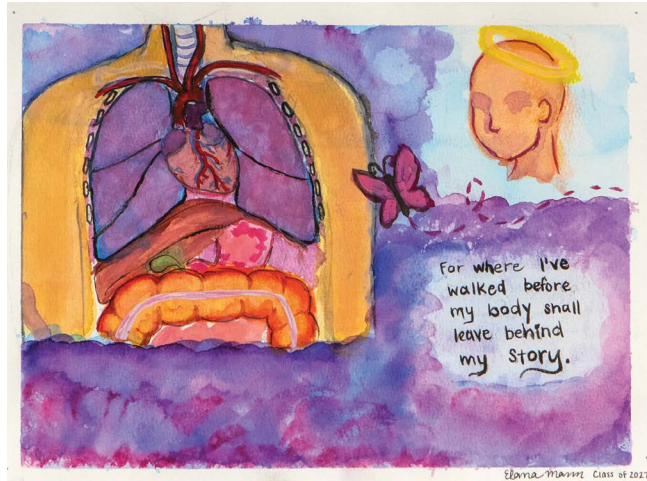
By Virginia Halterman



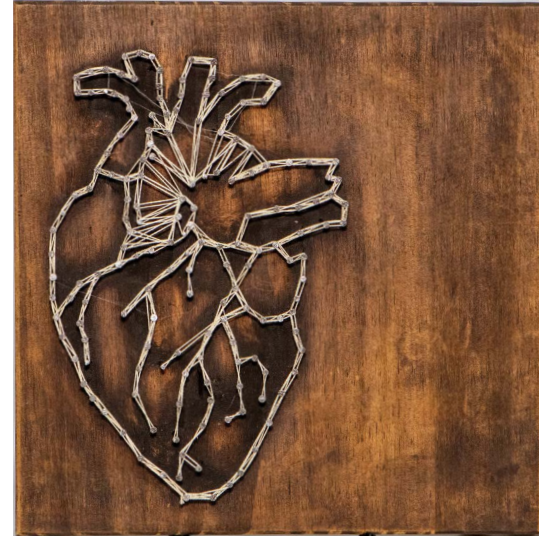
Mixed media  
Anonymous

Mixed media on canvas  
Ellie Cumpton, OMS II





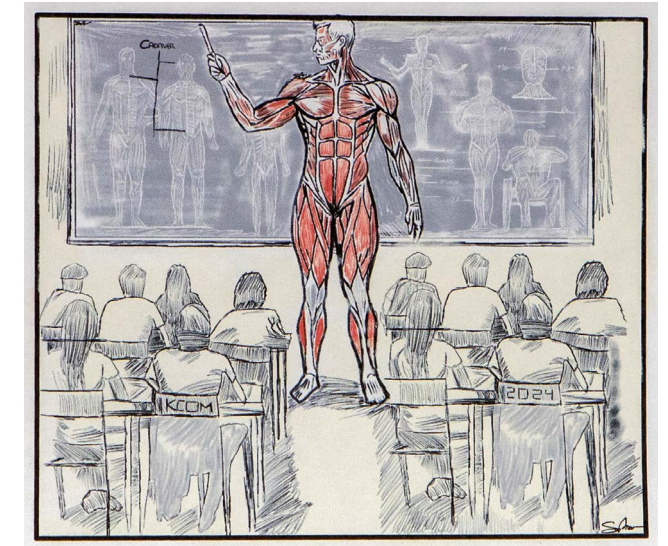
Watercolor painting  
Elana Mann, OMS II



3D string and nails on wood  
Emalie Petersen, OMS II



Paintings on mini canvas  
Christeena JoJo, OMS II



Sketch  
Sunny Patel, OMS II



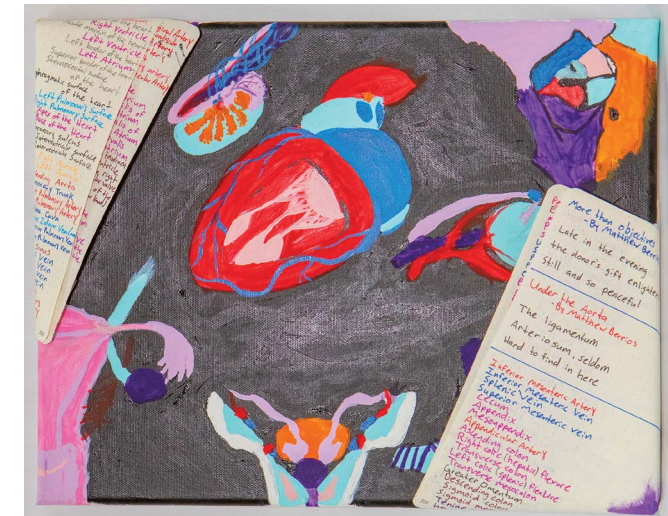
Sculpture  
Hadyn DeLeeuw, OMS II



Mixed media  
Hannah Billig, OMS II



Mixed media on canvas  
Mutiara Schlanker, OMS II



Mixed media on canvas  
Matthew Berrios, OMS II

Exploring and implementing innovative teaching methods for the gross anatomy course at ATSU's Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (ATSU-KCOM) is always top of mind for Sara Funk, DPT, assistant professor, anatomy. As an educator, Dr. Funk strives to provide students with unique opportunities to expand their knowledge and transform their learning experience.

For Dr. Funk, it's not just about dissecting a human cadaver and learning how the body's components work together to maintain life. It's also about comprehending what one cannot see with the naked eye, and having takeaways from the experience - learning how to work collaboratively with lab partners, sharpening one's observational skills, and

developing a strong sense of empathy and respect for others, especially future patients.

As the course progressed, Dr. Funk began to take notice of small drawings that students would create on practical exams to help them remember information. Some were simple sketches and some were complex, but all revealed these students are high-achieving and multidimensional, showing their enjoyment for an alternative method of self-expression beyond traditional science and medicine.

The revelation prompted Dr. Funk to develop an optional assignment for students to complete, one with no format or restrictions. Her only guidance was for the resulting work

to be a personal reflection of the student's experience in the dissection lab. To her surprise, almost 100 students completed the optional assignment, submitting a diverse array of highly creative projects.

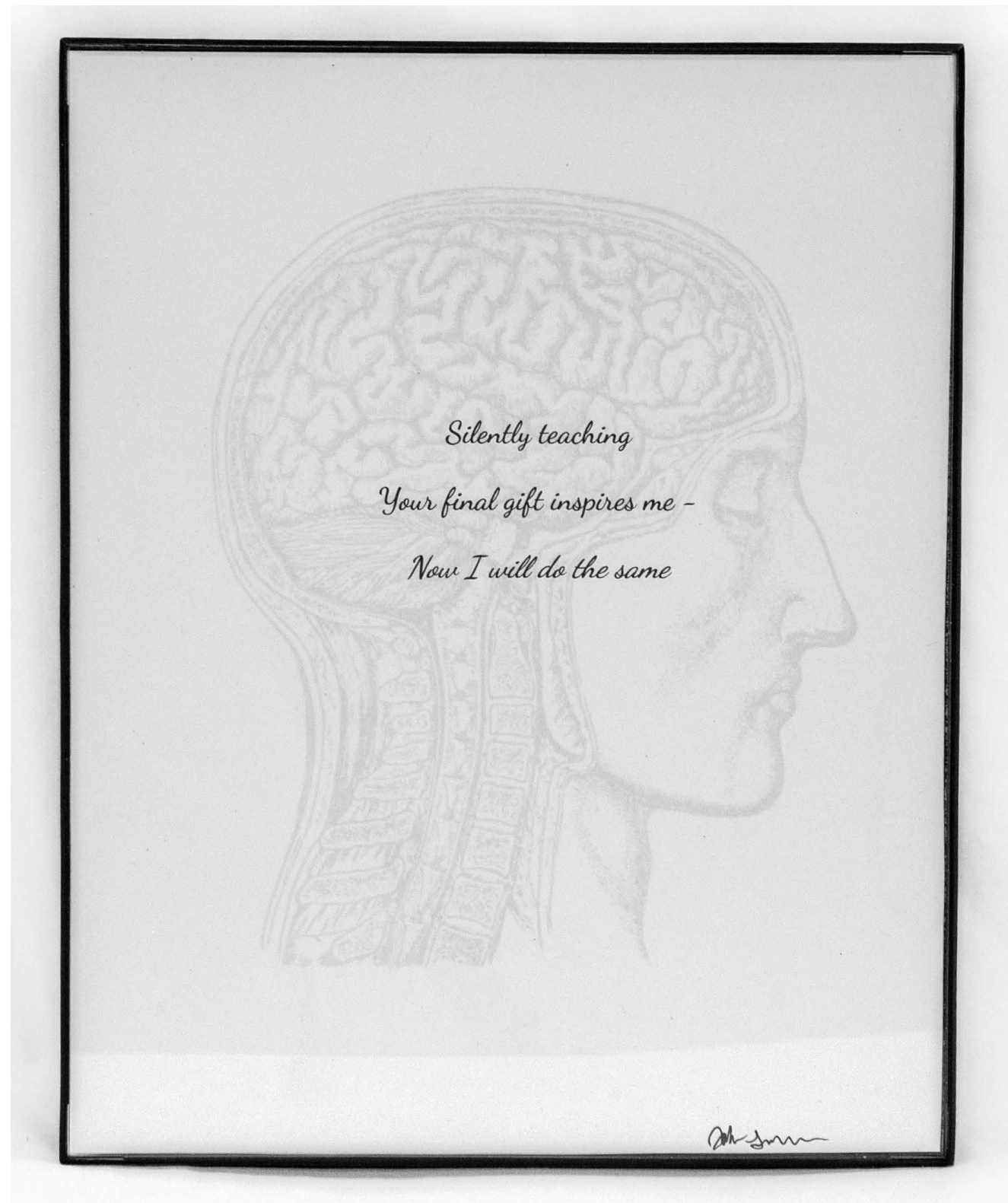
"I think it was very cathartic for many of them," says Dr. Funk, whose students submitted written essays, poems, children's books, watercolor paintings, sketches, pencil and ink drawings, puzzles, crochet projects, and more. "I plan to include this optional assignment as a regular part of ATSU-KCOM's gross anatomy course."

To recognize the first-year students' exceptional talent and share the deeper meaning of their dissection experience,

Patricia Sexton, DHed, MS, FNAOME, '08, associate dean of medical education, professor of family medicine, collaborated with Dr. Funk to host an anatomy art exhibition in August where their projects were on display for fellow students, faculty, and staff to enjoy. A second exhibit was assembled for ATSU-KCOM's Gift of Body Ceremony, an annual event held in October to honor those who gifted their bodies to the University, along with their families.

"The families do not always get the perspective of what this means to the students," Dr. Funk says. "The Gift of Body Ceremony and exhibit are really nice ways to honor that experience." ■





John Sylvara, OMS II

**Journal Entry (5-2-24)**

To our Donor,  
Thank you for having the courage to show your most vulnerable side and take the leap of faith to help the patients who are coming into the ED or operating room to have their lives in our hands. You will save many through your education that you have provided us. We are forever grateful! - Zak Sabetta, OMS II

**A Silent Orchestra**

by Haya Ahmed, OMS II

A human form lies still, serene.  
Upon the table, a wonder unseen.

At the sight of this shell once filled with breath,  
I am reminded of the fragility of life and death.

Beneath the skin, a story unfolds.  
Stories of the donor's existence are told.

Each incision reveals a tale.  
Was the cause of death cancer, suicide, or simply growing frail?

Muscles and tendons are woven into a symphony.  
One wrong cut, and the mystery remains incomplete.

A donor's gift is a silent plea,  
For us to unravel their journey delicately.

Memories linger in each vein,  
Echoes of laughter, drops of pain.

Nerves that hum, a heart that softly strums,  
Both ringing as reminders of a life gone numb.

Whispers of dreams lost in a haze,  
Left behind in an intricate maze.

A life that once felt joy and sorrow  
Is now a silent orchestra for the physicians of tomorrow.

**Silent Teachers**

by Rose Kalu Igwe, OMS I

Life, a sacred gift we dissect with care,  
Anatomy's canvas, our journey to bear,  
Seen through the eyes of eager med students' plight,  
And pondered by those who donate in the night.

Life, a spectrum of joy and pain we explore,  
In the silent cadaver, our lessons implore,  
Accidents, sickness, and nature's decree,  
In every incision, a story we see.

Death, the silent teacher, in repose,  
Cold and still, where knowledge flows,  
It sweeps us into the depths of the unknown,  
Yet grants us wisdom, though we may groan.

Muscles, bones, neurovascularatures, and facias from a cadaver  
All these we understand better,  
Through the silent teachings of the dissected form,  
In each incision, knowledge begins to swarm.

In the quiet halls where anatomy reigns,  
In the echo of scalpels and the scent of remains,  
We stand in reverence for the life they led,  
For the wisdom they offer in the silent bed.

Their last breaths our hearts do mourn,  
In memories cherished forever adorned  
Though they've left us, their spirit shall stay  
Guiding us through each passing day.

**Ken**

by Jenna Arciero, OMS II

I am not used to holding a hand whose life is far away  
How intimately I know him without his name  
Tattoos  
Scars  
How he transitioned from this world

A gift of body  
From him to me  
Am I worthy of this?

We gave him a name  
Because from him, we now know

I glimpsed inside  
Held in my hands what a book could never show  
Seen the beauty of our form  
How everything works together  
Until it does not

We were upset when we couldn't make you look perfect  
As perfect as we imagined you to be  
We spent more time with you than our loved ones  
Though we act as a family  
Laughing, chatting, listening to music with you

My patients won't know what I have experienced  
They won't understand the immensity of the gift wrapped  
in blue  
For the first day we met you still lingers in my mind  
But it does not haunt

I now look at my patients and truly see them  
They are also gifts to be honored  
People I can possibly help  
But for him, I cannot  
He has given more than I can ever return

Thank you for being patient with us  
Thank you for teaching us  
You have never known me  
But I will never forget you  
Ken

# Faster, stronger

# higher,

Four alumni from ATSU's Doctor of Athletic Training program support medal-winning teams at 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

By Jason Hunsicker

They were finished, until they weren't. The U.S. Olympic Women's Rugby Sevens were down to the final seconds of their bronze medal game against Australia, trailing 12-7. Alex Sedrick received the ball near her own goal line, wrestled herself free from one defender, and was immediately wrapped up by another.

It was over, and then it wasn't. Sedrick overpowered the Australian, and suddenly there was nothing in front of her but the green grass of Stade de France. A crowd of 69,000 roared louder as Sedrick raced the length of the pitch before diving across the try line with no time on the clock. Her conversion to follow made the final score 13-12.

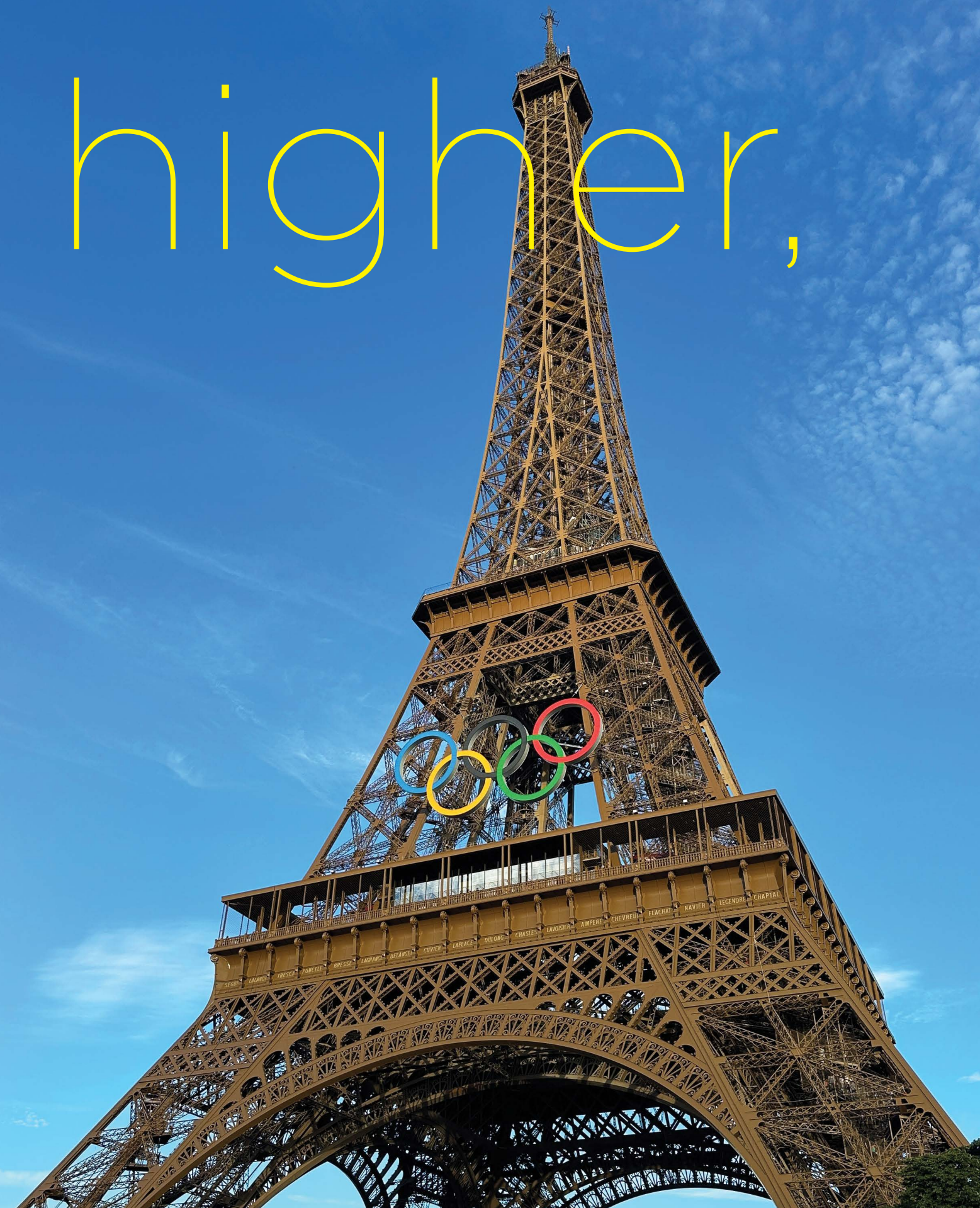
Improbable. Incredible. Unforgettable.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are known for such moments. For a few weeks every few years, the greatest athletes in the world descend upon host nations, chasing medals and creating memories for themselves, their countries, and those watching in the stands and in homes across the globe.

The 2024 Summer Games in Paris were memorable, too, for ATSU-Arizona School of Health Sciences' (ATSU-ASHS) Doctor of Athletic Training (DAT) program, which saw four alumni providing support to athletes pursuing the pinnacle of their sports. Quinton Sawyer, DAT, ATC, '17, was an athletic trainer with the U.S. Olympic Men's Basketball Team; Nicole Titmas, DAT, ATC, '20, was an athletic trainer with the U.S. Olympic Women's Rugby Sevens Team; Joshua Honrado, DAT, MS, '20, was an athletic trainer with the U.S. Paralympic Badminton Team; and Courtney Watson, DAT, MS, '20, was an athletic trainer with the U.S. Women's 3x3 Basketball Team.

The medal count? Four. One gold, one silver, and two bronze, including the first medals in U.S. history for Women's Olympic Rugby and Olympic or Paralympic Badminton – quite a haul for athletes supported by those educated at ATSU-ASHS.

"A medal is really, really important at the Olympics," Dr. Titmas says. "To see them accomplish that was just so awesome."



## NICOLE TITMAS, DAT, ATC, '20

*Athletic trainer with the U.S. Olympic Women's Rugby Sevens Team*

Dr. Titmas is manager of medical services for USA Rugby Sevens and head athletic trainer of the women's team. She'd played sports throughout her life but didn't know much about rugby until beginning her undergraduate studies at University of Rhode Island. Seeking competition and structure, she joined the team.

Academically, she was interested in a sports or training-related field, but her path toward becoming an athletic trainer didn't form until she suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) during her sophomore year.

"Back then, the ACL injury was the dreaded injury and long rehab," Dr. Titmas says. "Luckily, I had really good physical therapists and athletic trainers who I worked with. For me, that was the turning point. It was really cool to have those medical providers there for you when you're going through this dark stage, when something you've been doing,

your sport, is taken away through injury. You have these professionals who say, 'Hold on, it's OK, we do this all of the time.' They help keep you on track, help you gain strength, and get back into your sport."

Dr. Titmas worked with the men's basketball team during her senior year, followed by an internship, and then the athletic training master's program at Plymouth State University. A professor there, Patty Lacey, served as a mentor to Dr. Titmas and had a rugby connection.

"She had worked for USA Rugby and there were a few camps she wasn't able to cover. She said, 'Hey, do you want to get your foot in the door?' And I started to work my way up by covering the national pathways events," says Dr. Titmas, who has been in a full-time role with the program since 2012. Paris marked her third Olympic Games with the team.

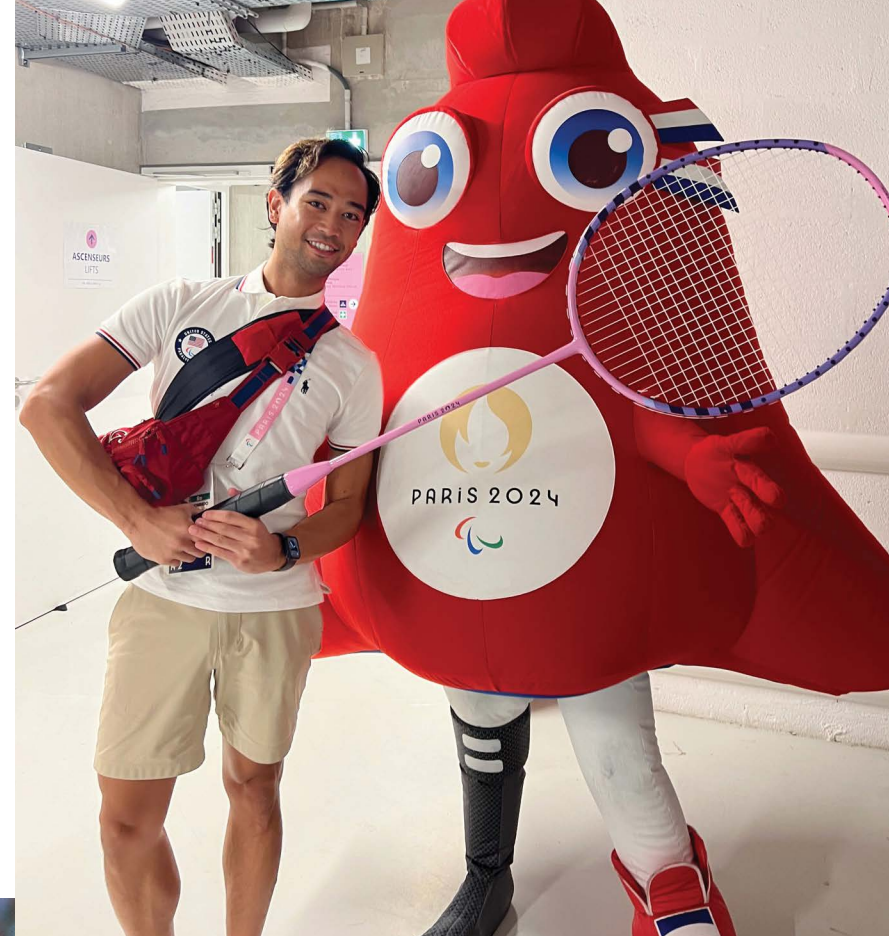


Dr. Nicole Titmas provides treatment to Team USA player Alev Kelter during the Paris Olympics.

Inset: Dr. Nicole Titmas poses with Team USA player and captain Lauren Doyle after winning bronze at the Paris Olympics.



Photo credit: Alex Ho



Dr. Joshua Honrado meets the Paris Olympics' mascot, called Olympic Phryge, during the badminton competition.

## JOSHUA HONRADO, DAT, MS, '20

*Athletic trainer with the U.S. Paralympic Team*

Dr. Honrado wasn't much into playing sports, as he grew up with childhood asthma. Instead, he sang in the choir and played the alto saxophone. He attended UCLA and had an interest in physical therapy before discovering the Sports Medicine Internship Program.

"That was my first introduction to the athletic training profession, and I loved it," he says. "I knew this is what I wanted to do, except with performing artists, because I'd recognized it was a needed service for that population."

He crossed the country to attend the athletic training master's program at Seton Hall University, choosing it because of its proximity to Broadway. Dr. Honrado found a clinical affiliation with Harkness Center for Dance Injuries at NYU Langone Health, did a rotation there, and was offered a position when he graduated. He's been with the center for the last nine years.

His Olympic connection stems from his childhood, growing up glued to the TV, alongside his family. In 1996, when an injured Kerri Strug landed a gold-medal-clinching vault for



Dr. Joshua Honrado poses with the Paralympic Games emblem.

the U.S. Women's Olympic Gymnastics Team, his personal goal was set.

"You could just see the athleticism, but also the pain, and her pushing through the pain, the crowd going wild, her coach lifting her up," Dr. Honrado says. "I wanted to be a part of that."

While a student at Seton Hall, Dr. Honrado presented a poster at the 2013 National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) conference, and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) had a booth in the exhibit hall. He inquired about volunteering and was told he needed at least three years of experience.

Nine years later, he was again presenting a poster at the conference and came across the USOPC table. He took it as a sign and volunteered for a two-week rotation at the USOPC's Colorado Springs Training Center in 2023. He was added to the pool of medical providers and later received a volunteer position for the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris.



Dr. Quinton Sawyer speaks with Team USA's LeBron James during the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

### QUINTON SAWYER, DAT, ATC, '17

*Athletic trainer with the U.S. Olympic Men's Basketball Team*

Dr. Sawyer was a pre-med major at University of North Carolina (UNC) before he was introduced to the athletic training profession. It was exactly the future he was looking for.

"It more closely aligned to what my professional interests were turning into, which was a former high school athlete who was very interested in sports in general," he says.

"Athletic training, more than medicine, allowed me an opportunity to be directly involved with sports teams on a day-to-day basis and continue to be a part of competitive sports as my profession."

He completed his master's degree at UNC in 2006 and quickly found himself in the world of top competition in college and professional sports, with the UNC men's basketball, swimming, and diving teams, Phoenix Suns, Michigan State men's basketball team, and more. In 2018, he became associate head athletic trainer with the Charlotte Hornets and is currently the team's head athletic trainer.

Dr. Sawyer completed a two-week volunteer rotation at the USOPC's Lake Placid Training Center and was later contacted by the U.S. Men's National Basketball Team.

"I got a phone call saying, 'Hey, would you be interested in being a part of what we're doing?' Absolutely I was interested," he says.

Dr. Sawyer served with the U.S. Select Team in preparation for the 2021 Olympics and with the Men's National Team at the 2023 World Cup before being asked to work as an athletic trainer with the 2024 U.S. Men's Olympic Basketball Team.

"It's an honor and a privilege. It's been an extremely humbling experience to be supporting, arguably, the greatest athletes in the world, especially in the sport of basketball," he says. "I'm of the age that I grew up watching the Dream Team. To have the opportunity to work with USA Basketball, to help represent our country on the international stage, is something I didn't even know to dream about as a little kid."



Dr. Quinton Sawyer poses with a gold medal after Team USA defeated France in the men's basketball final.

Photo credit: Charlotte Hornets

### COURTNEY WATSON, DAT, MS, '20

*Athletic trainer with the U.S. Women's and Men's 3x3 Basketball Teams*

Dr. Watson is presently director of player health & performance and head athletic trainer with the Portland Trail Blazers, after serving last season as head athletic trainer. A graduate of University of California, Berkeley, and PennWest California, she's worked as a sports medicine consultant and founded Court's Corner LA Sports Medicine in 2001. She's also been head athletic trainer with the WNBA's Houston Comets and Los Angeles Sparks for 16 years and was the first female athletic trainer in boxing, working as medical director and athletic trainer for champion Floyd Mayweather.

Her interest in the field began in high school, when Dr. Watson was a multisport athlete. A friend suffered an injury, and she helped take them to training appointments as they recovered.

"The West Coast Sports Medicine Foundation/Team to Win in Los Angeles provided athletic trainer opportunities in high school for economically deprived student athletes," she says. "Through mentorship and hands-on practice taking care of all the athletes, I was excited to discover what would become one of my rewarding passions. I never turned back."

When the USOPC began forming a 3x3 basketball program for future competition, a representative reached out to Dr. Watson, who had established herself with more than a decade of experience as an athletic trainer in the WNBA. She began working with the men's and women's 3x3 teams in the lead up to the 2021 Tokyo Games, served as head athletic trainer with the U.S. Women's Basketball National Team at the 2022 FIBA World Cup, and served as an athletic trainer with the U.S. Olympic Women's and Men's 3x3 Basketball teams at the Paris Olympics.

It has been the fulfillment of a childhood dream. Dr. Watson's late grandmother, Laverne Govan, was a teacher, and her lessons didn't stop when she left the classroom.

"She saw how much I loved sports, and she would teach me what the Olympics were all about," Dr. Watson says. "We used to watch it together."

Being part of the Olympics became a goal, and Dr. Watson leaped at the chance when an invitation came to become a part of the sports medicine team.

Dr. Watson credits her grandmother, too, for her decision to pursue a DAT degree. She had always pushed Dr. Watson to achieve the highest levels of education possible, and when a colleague in ATSU-ASHS' DAT program told her about the opportunity, she sought to complete another life goal.

"It was 2016. I had just won the championship with the LA Sparks, as well as the Mayweather-(Manny) Pacquiao fight (billed as "The Fight of the Century") that year. I felt it was the perfect time to advance my education and explore my professional dreams. Ultimately, obtaining my doctorate degree was such a rewarding moment in my life that I will never take for granted," she says.



Top: Dr. Courtney Watson poses with the U.S. Olympic Team logo.

Bottom: Dr. Courtney Watson celebrates with Team USA player Cierra Burdick following the bronze medal game.

## ATSU's DAT program advances the athletic training profession

Experiences like the Winter Institute, where the DAT program's online students gather in Arizona for a week of in-person learning and discussion, helped Dr. Watson establish relationships with others in the field who were striving to be at the top of their profession.

"There's not a lot of us," Dr. Watson says of those who have completed a DAT program, "but being able to be a part of that percentage of those who wanted to excel, it's fun."

Drs. Titmas, Honrado, and Sawyer were also already in the midst of successful careers when they decided to further their education and pursue a DAT degree. Dr. Titmas had just returned from the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro when she began thinking about advancing her clinical education skills.

"ATSU really stood out to me. The program, the school itself, world renowned for their medical programs," Dr. Titmas says. "I liked how the program was set up. They encourage you to be working while you're doing the program, and I thought that was really beneficial. I was learning, and I was able to implement new skills. It made us have deeper discussions with my colleagues."

Dr. Sawyer saw the DAT degree as both a way to enhance his skills and a chance to be one of the first in his field to take this step.

"The opportunity to be on the forefront of this emerging degree pathway for our profession was exciting," Dr. Sawyer says. "I wanted to ensure that anything I spent time and money on as an adult, who already had an established professional career, was going to bring value to me as a student, make me a better athletic trainer and leader. I found the program at ATSU checked all of those boxes at a very high level.

"I grew an enormous amount, and it allowed me to be exposed to thinking through a lot of the issues of our profession at a much deeper level,

and have higher-level conversations about the issues and challenges of our profession with people who could help shape my thinking on some of those topics."

For Dr. Honrado, the same thing that led him to a life-changing encounter at a NATA conference led him to seek out ATSU-ASHS' DAT program – research.

"I knew my master's in athletic training would only get me so far within the research realm, and I knew I still wanted to continue practicing clinically, so as opposed to the PhD, I chose the doctor of athletic training route," he says. "I knew I would be working with elite athletes and medical professionals, and initially, I did have thoughts of imposter syndrome. But completing the DAT at ATSU provided me the confidence to know I had the clinical knowledge to successfully navigate any situation."

The Olympic motto is "Citius, Altius, Fortius," Latin words that translate to "Faster, Higher, Stronger." ATSU's Doctor of Athletic Training program isn't responsible for the success of graduates like Drs. Titmas, Honrado, Sawyer, or Watson, but there's no mistaking the common traits of those who seek out, enroll in, and complete the program.

It's for a different level of athletic trainer. It's for those who aren't satisfied. It's for those who want to push themselves, the athletes they support, and the profession itself to be faster, higher, and stronger.

"We're all wanting to be the best. We're champions within ourselves," Dr. Watson says. "The athletes look at us as an extension of themselves, so, ultimately, we're the best in the world in what we do, as well." ■





# CONNECTIONS



## Make your mark in healthcare

A.T. Still University's Arizona School of Health Sciences (ATSU-ASHS) graduates health professionals who are highly skilled in evidence-based practice and are committed to reducing health disparities for individuals and communities.

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**ATSU** | Arizona School of Health Sciences

ATSU's College for Healthy Communities welcomed 88 new students to its Central Coast Physician Assistant program on Friday, July 26. The White Coat Ceremony, held in Arroyo Grande, California, included remarks from Jennifer Harrington, DMS, PA-C, DFAAPA, professor, chair, and director; O.T. Wendel, PhD, president, ATSU Arizona & California campuses; Eric Sauers, PhD, '97, dean and professor; and Craig M. Phelps, DO, '84, ATSU chancellor. Paola Gonzalez, MPAS, PA-C, president, Physician Associates for Latino Health, delivered the keynote address.

"The symbolism of the white coat you'll don today represents not only a garment of professional identity, but also a mantle of responsibility, compassion, and unwavering dedication," Dr. Wendel said.

### IN THIS SECTION

- Reconnect
- Donor recognition
- Class notes
- Faculty & staff news
- In memoriam

\*ATSU alumni who implement the 20% tuition discount are encouraged to contact a tax professional regarding any tax implications. All discounts are independent and cannot be combined with any other offers.

## RECENT ALUMNI EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

When members of the ATSU family gather, a common thread emerges. Friends reconnect, new bonds develop, and students find inspiration. From coast to coast and many points in between, recent events brought energetic, diverse, accomplished groups of individuals together – enriching and reinforcing the tapestry of social and professional networks that bind the University community together.

### FALL 2024-WINTER 2025



DO Alumni, Students & Friends Reception

**DO Alumni, Students & Friends Reception | American Osteopathic Association Osteopathic Medical Education (AOA OMED) Conference**

San Antonio Marriott Riverwalk | San Antonio, Texas



ATSU-CGHS Alumni & Missouri Public Health Workforce Grant Recipient Luncheon

**ATSU-CGHS Alumni & Missouri Public Health Workforce Grant Recipient Luncheon**

ATSU Missouri campus | Kirksville, Missouri



KCOM Alumni Reunion

**ATSU Founder's Day 2024**

ATSU Missouri campus | Kirksville, Missouri

ATSU Arizona campus | Mesa, Arizona



ATSU-ASDOH Dental Alumni Dinner

**ATSU-ASDOH Dental Alumni Dinner | National Network for Oral Health Access (NNOHA)**

Baltimore, Maryland

**ATSU-MOSDOH Dental Alumni Luncheon | Mid-Continent Dental Congress Greater St. Louis Dental Society Annual Meeting**

Gothic Corridor, Union Station | St. Louis, Missouri

**ATSU-ASHS Speech-Language Pathology Alumni, Students & Friends Reception | American Speech-Language-Hearing Association convention**

Alder & Ash | Seattle, Washington

**DO & Regional Alumni, Students & Friends Reception | American College of Osteopathic Internists (ACOI) and American College of Osteopathic Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOOG) Collaborative Conferences**

Westin Kierland Resort | Scottsdale, Arizona

**Physical Therapy (PT) Alumni, Students & Friends Reception | American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) Combined Sessions Meeting**

Embassy Suites by Hilton Downtown Houston | Houston, Texas

**Give Kids A Smile and ATSU-ASDOH Alumni Weekend**

ATSU Arizona campus | Mesa, Arizona

## UPCOMING ALUMNI EVENTS

**ATSU-ASHS 30th Anniversary Celebration & Alumni Reunion**

Superstition Springs Golf Club | Mesa, Arizona  
April 12, 2025

**Alumni, Students & Friends Reception | American Association of Physician Associates (AAPA) Annual Conference**

Hyatt Regency Denver | Denver, Colorado  
May 18, 2025

**Alumni, Students & Friends Reception | American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) Annual Session**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
April 25, 2025

**Alumni, Students & Friends Reception | National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) Clinical Symposia & AT Expo**

Orlando, Florida  
June 2025

**ATSU-KCOM Words of Wisdom Alumni-Student Engagement Event**

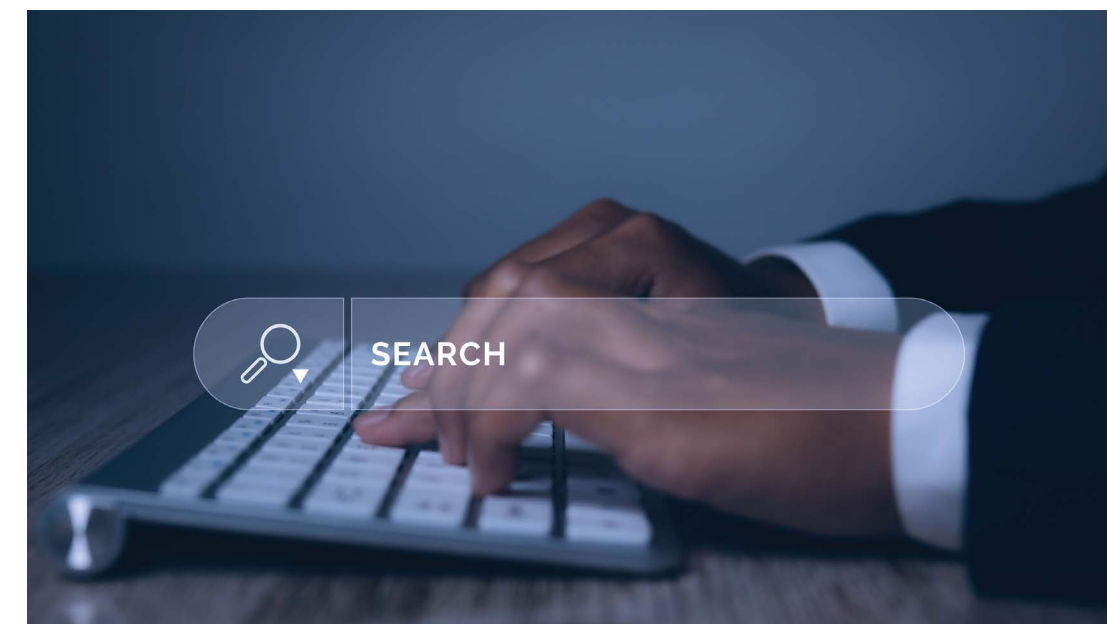
ATSU Missouri campus | Kirksville, Missouri  
May 2, 2025

## Attention job seekers and employers!

Alumni employment opportunities are available across the U.S.

The University provides an online job board for ATSU alumni seeking employment and for employers searching for ATSU graduates to fill vacant positions. These job opportunities are shared by external employers and other alumni who value the skills and expertise of ATSU graduates. As a free resource for employers and job seekers, we encourage you to check back often when you are looking for a new opportunity or when you have positions at your organization or company to advertise.

Please contact [alumni@atsu.edu](mailto:alumni@atsu.edu) with any questions.



[atsu.edu/alumni-jobs](https://atsu.edu/alumni-jobs)

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# Guiding the future of medicine

ATSU Board of Trustees member and former chair Herb Kuhn reflects on his lifelong commitment to healthcare

By Arselia Gales

Herb Kuhn knows a thing or two about the healthcare industry.

The current ATSU Board of Trustees member and former CEO of the Missouri Hospital Association has dedicated his entire career to healthcare, focusing on public policy and operations. Appointed by former U.S. President George W. Bush, Kuhn has held four different leadership roles with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, ultimately serving as acting administrator. Additionally, he served as corporate vice president for Premier and vice president for government relations at the American Hospital Association, and he worked on Capitol Hill for six years.

After spending 30 years in Washington, D.C., working in various government and private sector capacities, the Midwest native moved to Missouri, where he led the Missouri Hospital Association for 12 years before retiring.

When Kuhn moved to Missouri, he served on a number of boards and commissions, including the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Fellowship Board. It was there he met former ATSU board member, Clyde H. Evans, PhD. When Dr. Evans learned of Kuhn's extensive background in Medicare and his service with MedPAC, he recognized Kuhn as an ideal fit for ATSU's board.

"One thing led to another, and now I've finished my sixth year on the board," Kuhn says.

Kuhn recently concluded a two-year term as board chair, a position he found extremely fulfilling. In his six year tenure, he witnessed significant growth, including the opening of the Santa Maria, California, campus and the graduation of its first class last year. He also applauds the University's new organizational structure and views it as a way to keep the ATSU more efficient and organized.

"What I've found is that my professional work, which had a strong focus on improving the wellbeing of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, is quite similar to my work on the board when considering issues related to the University and the wellbeing and success of students," he says.

In his retirement, Kuhn has embraced travel, golfing, and community volunteering.

As Kuhn enters his final three-year term, he is optimistic about the University's future, particularly its expanding partnerships with other community partners.

"I think in the future it's those new partnerships that are going to continue to propel ATSU forward," he says, "and that's what I'm most excited about."

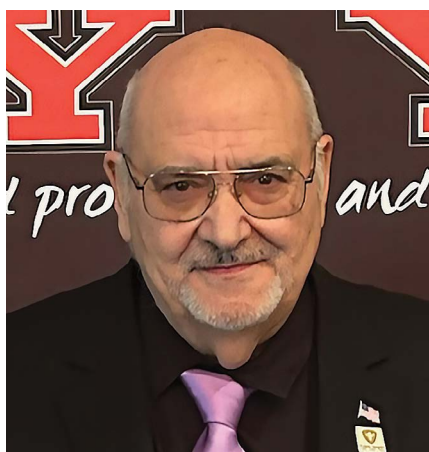
**"In addition to an abundance of knowledge and experience in policy making, healthcare, and business, Mr. Kuhn brings extensive leadership experience to our board. ATSU is fortunate to have him, and he is a pleasure to work with."**

- Dr. Craig M. Phelps, ATSU chancellor

## CLASS NOTES



Rachel M. Klamo, DO, MS, FAAFP, '06



Leonard Perry, MPH, '11

## 1990s

**Don Gibbon, DO, '90**, competed in the International Natural Bodybuilding Association and Professional Natural Bodybuilding Association Natural Olympia held at the Golden Nugget Hotel in Las Vegas from Nov. 8-9. Competitors represented more than 30 countries across six continents, with no anabolic steroids or other performance enhancing drugs permitted. On Nov. 8, Dr. Gibbon won the amateur Grand Master (age 50+) category, becoming the amateur world champion. Having qualified to compete as a professional, he made his professional debut on Nov. 9, competing in the professional Grand Master category. He finished fourth in the world.

Dr. Gibbon, age 60, returned to competitive bodybuilding in 2023 after a 35-year hiatus. He was the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Junior Iowa state champion in 1988 while a student at ATSU-KCOM. He has been competing in triathlons and other endurance events since that time. An emergency medicine physician and healthcare insurance executive, he retired in June 2022.

## 2000s

**Rachel M. Klamo, DO, MS, FAAFP, '06**, was named the 76th president of the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians.

**Abigail Mitchell, DHEd, MSN, MBA, RN, CNE, FHERDSA, '09**, was appointed associate dean for graduate and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs at D'Youville University, located in Buffalo, New York. She has been a full professor since 2017, with more than 24 years in higher education and 30 years in leadership and management. A graduate of ATSU-CGHS' Doctor of Health Education program, she recently obtained her master of business administration degree through Capella University. Dr. Mitchell has published more than 25 manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals and has been a keynote speaker for various nursing conferences locally, nationally, and internationally. She is a certified nurse educator and is a fellow with the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia. She is also a Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education accreditor and an editor for *Nursing & Palliative Care* journal. In her spare time, she plays the bagpipes for the Celtic Spirit Pipe Band of western New York.

## 2010s

**Leonard Perry, MPH, '11**, was honored by Youngstown State University's (YSU) Bitonte College of Health and Human Services during its 15th annual Alumni Recognition Dinner. During his career, Perry worked as a member of the District Board of Health of Mahoning County for 35 years. Perry was also



Nadia Thyberg, DO, '15



Sherron S. Cook, DHSc, '19, MS, PA-C, '08

the director of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety at YSU, where upon his retirement, he was conferred the title administrator emeritus. Perry is now a doctoral candidate in health sciences at YSU. He is an honoree for Health Professions.

**Mark Harrington, DO, '15**, an ATSU-KCOM graduate, was named venue medical director of Red Bull Arena by Major League Soccer.

**Shirlene Samuel, DO, '15**, was reappointed by Texas Governor Greg Abbot to the Texas Medical Board District Four Review Committee. A graduate of ATSU-KCOM, Dr. Samuel is a board-certified pediatrician at Austin Regional Clinic in Austin, Texas. She is a member of the American Association of Pediatrics and American Osteopathic Association. Additionally, she serves in the children's ministry at Red Rocks Church Austin and has served as a gubernatorial appointee on the Review Committee for two years.

**Nadia Thyberg, DO, '15**, joined Children's Hospital Colorado, Colorado Springs, as a hospitalist. A graduate of ATSU-SOMA, Dr. Thyberg completed her pediatric residency at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego and was stationed in Okinawa, Japan, as a Navy pediatrician.

**Sherron S. Cook, DHSc, '19, MS, PA-C, '08**, was honored as a Pinnacle Lifetime Member by the Inner Circle. Currently, Dr. Cook is spearheading a functional medicine service plan aimed at Native

American women aged 30-50. By leveraging her experience with tribal clinics and the Indian Health Service, she aims to address pre-diabetic and metabolic issues prevalent in these communities.

**Donald "Donny" Roshan, DO, '19**, was announced as the leader of the new Phelps Health Weight Loss and Bariatric Center in Rolla, Missouri. Dr. Roshan is a Rolla native and ATSU-KCOM graduate who is passionate about helping the community reach their health goals. The center will feature surgical and nonsurgical weight loss solutions, personalized nutritional counseling, and ongoing support to help patients achieve and maintain their weight loss goals.

## 2020s

**Ethan Burlingame, DO, '21**, joined Aspirus Lake View Two Harbors Clinic in Two Harbors, Minnesota. A graduate of ATSU-KCOM, Dr. Burlingame is a member of a number of professional societies, including the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Family Physicians, and American Medical Association.

**Jameson Laub, DO, '21**, joined Southwest Health System in Cortez, Colorado, as a family medical doctor. Dr. Laub is a graduate of ATSU-SOMA.

**David Erpenbach, DMSc, '22**, was named inaugural program director for the Doctor of Medical Science program at South College in Knoxville, Tennessee. Dr. Erpenbach previously served as a clinical coordinator and assistant professor.

**Lauran Chambers, DO, '24**, was appointed as resident representative to the Iowa Osteopathic Medical Association Board of Directors. Dr. Chambers is a graduate of ATSU-KCOM and is completing a family medicine residency in her home state of Iowa.

## SHARE YOUR NEWS!

Have you recently met up with a fellow ATSU alum? Did you get a promotion, reach a milestone, or earn recognition? Maybe you have a story you'd like to share. Tell us about it at [stillmagazine@atsu.edu](mailto:stillmagazine@atsu.edu)



Capt. Sean Barbabella, DO, '96

## ATSU-KCOM alumnus appointed as personal physician to the U.S. president

**Capt. Sean Barbabella, DO, '96**, a decorated U.S. Navy veteran, was appointed as President Donald Trump's personal physician. Dr. Barbabella previously served as the commanding officer of Naval Health Clinic Cherry Point in Havelock, North Carolina. Specialized in emergency and tactical medicine, Dr. Barbabella has devoted his career to serving as a Navy physician. Following his graduation from ATSU-KCOM, he completed his residency at Portsmouth Naval Medical Center in Virginia. His military service includes multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He was awarded the Legion of Merit by the Marines during a year deployment to Afghanistan in 2011-12 where he served as 2nd Marine Division surgeon. He was also awarded a Purple Heart for his 2009 deployment to Afghanistan where he was a pioneering physician of the Mobile Trauma Bay, a large armored vehicle used in combat to treat wounded soldiers on the battlefield.



Donald "Donny" Roshan, DO, '19



Ethan Burlingame, DO, '21

# HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY!



**Julian R. Gershon Sr., DO, '52**, celebrated his centennial birthday with his family. In addition to being an alumnus, Dr. Gershon served on the University's Board of Trustees for several years. Below is an excerpt written by the staff of the Friends of the National World War II Memorial, published on Nov. 27, 2024.

*Born in The Bronx, New York, in 1924, Dr. Gershon has lived a life defined by courage, compassion, and unwavering dedication to service.*

*During World War II, Dr. Gershon served with distinction in the 103rd Infantry Division of the U.S. Army Medical Corps, deployed to Germany and France. He endured two battlefield injuries and was awarded the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, and Silver Star for his bravery and contributions to the Allied victory. His valor during the war exemplifies the selflessness and resilience of the Greatest Generation.*

*After the war, Dr. Gershon followed in his father's footsteps to pursue a career in medicine. He began as an anesthesiologist before transitioning to family medicine, dedicating decades to the care of patients in Michigan and Florida. Known for*

*his medical expertise and deep empathy, he practiced until the age of 93, delivering over 4,000 babies in Clare, Michigan — including some of his own grandchildren. Beyond his medical career, he completed hospice training and spent his retirement providing comfort and companionship to fellow veterans in their final days, continuing to give back to the community he held dear.*

*Dr. Gershon was married to the love of his life, Betty Gershon, for more than 60 years until her passing in 2015. Together, they built a life filled with love, raising a family that now includes 10 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. His devotion to his family is matched only by his commitment to mentoring future generations and supporting young athletes and veterans, leaving an indelible mark on those who have been fortunate to know him.*

Julian R. Gershon Sr., DO, '52, seated front center, with his family



Photo credit: Danielle May Photography

# UPCOMING CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

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Best Practices for Managing Mental Health Conditions in the Collegiate Setting

Examination of Concussion Reporting Influences and Educational Programs

Health Information Technology in Athletic Training

Incorporating Evidence-Based Practice into Athletic Training: An Overview of Practice-Based Partnerships

Medicolegal Considerations for Sport-Related Concussion

Home study courses are available year-round and are web-based. Please email [atce@atsu.edu](mailto:atce@atsu.edu) for more information.

## DENTAL Programs offered by ATSU-MOSDOH

Oropharyngeal Cancer: Why It Matters!  
May 9, 2025

Revamping Your Treatment Plan Presentation Skills  
June 17, 2025

Power of Precision: Use of Robotics in Dental Implant Surgery  
Aug. 18, 2025

The Fundamentals of Oral Systemic Health  
Sep. 26, 2025

ATSU-MOSDOH is ADA CERP and AGD PACE approved. All opportunities are held virtually. For more information, [mosdohce@atsu.edu](mailto:mosdohce@atsu.edu) or call 314.230.7079.

## MEDICAL

Founder's Day - Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine Update  
Oct. 23-25, 2025  
Missouri campus | Kirksville, Missouri

Big Cedar - Primary Care Update  
Dec. 4-6, 2025  
Big Cedar Lodge | Ridgedale, Missouri

ATSU-KCOM CME Cruise - Primary Care Update  
Jan. 18-24, 2026  
Royal Caribbean - Oasis of the Seas | Departure port: Ft. Lauderdale, Florida  
Western Caribbean

Big Cedar - Primary Care Update  
Dec. 3-5, 2026  
Big Cedar Lodge | Ridgedale, Missouri

ATSU is accredited by the American Osteopathic Association to provide osteopathic continuing medical education for physicians.

For more information, email [continuingeducation@atsu.edu](mailto:continuingeducation@atsu.edu) or call 660.626.2232.

## PHYSICAL THERAPY

Mechanisms Underlying ACL Injury: Implications for Evidence-Based Rehabilitation, Return to Sport Decisions & Injury Prevention, hosted by Orthopedic Physical Therapy Residency  
June 7, 2025  
Arizona campus | Mesa, Arizona

To register for courses online or learn about upcoming activities, please visit [atsu.edu/ce](https://atsu.edu/ce) or call 866.626.2878, ext. 2232.

## FACULTY & STAFF NEWS

### ATSU

**Roxana Aguirre, EdD, MEd**, was promoted to clinical rotation services administrator in the Arizona & California President's Office.

**Nora Alhaddad, MBA**, was promoted to director, post-award compliance, for Sponsored Programs.

**Kyle Allsup**, specialist, academic technologies, received the Employee Excellence Award for the Arizona and California campuses for the third quarter of 2024.

**Don Altman, DDS, DHSc, EdD, '12**, vice chancellor, academic support, was accepted as a peer reviewer by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Peer reviewer training will begin in 2025 with new HLC standards taking effect in September 2025.

**Cameron Benson** is a new boiler plant operator in the Boiler Room.

**Lindsey Bird** was promoted to application coordinator for Residential Admissions.

**Lori Choate** was promoted to assistant director for Sponsored Programs.

**Chris Crismon** was named director of Assessment & Accreditation. He was also accepted as a peer reviewer by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Peer reviewer training will begin in 2025 with new HLC standards taking effect in September 2025.

**Alan Freeman, DM**, senior director, patient care centers, graduated from the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Course Design Institute.

**Samantha Halterman** was promoted to assistant director for Residential Admissions.

**Charles Heckert** is the new research coordinator II for Research Support.

**Megan Hudnall** was promoted to assistant director, student financial aid, for Enrollment Services.

**Rosemary Kuilan** is the new student accounts coordinator for Finance.

**Kaylee Morgenstern** was promoted to director for Enrollment Services.

**Bobby Rogers**, HVAC lead mechanic, maintenance, received the Missouri campus Employee Excellence Award for the third quarter of 2024.



Nora Alhaddad, ATSU



Chris Crismon, ATSU



Kaylee Morgenstern, ATSU



Dr. Mitzi Wasden, ASDOH



Sunna Khokhar, ASHS



Dr. Ivonne Maldonado de La Rosa, ASHS

**Alexandria Stratton, MA**, was promoted to admissions counselor for Residential Admissions.

### ATSU-ASDOH

**George Blue Spruce Jr., DDS, MPH**, assistant dean, American Indian affairs, was inducted as a fellow in the American College of Dentists. Formally nominated in 2023, Dr. Blue Spruce received an in-absentia induction during an informal ceremony on Saturday, Sept. 14, 2024, at the Heard Museum in Phoenix. In addition, Dr. Blue Spruce was recognized by ATSU with a proclamation declaring Nov. 19 as Dr. George Blue Spruce Jr. Day, honoring his lifelong dedication to advancing healthcare, education, and opportunities for American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

**Alfredo Hernandez, DDS, MS**, associate professor, predoctoral education, graduated from the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Course Design Institute.

**Mitzi Wasden, DDS, MS**, adjunct faculty, predoctoral education, and **Joseph Creech, DDS**, adjunct faculty, predoctoral education, received the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 first runner-up Innovation in Teaching for Learning Award for their project, "Acting It Out: A Classroom Activity to Improve Knowledge and Visualization of Space Management Principles."

### ATSU-ASHS

**Barton Anderson, DHSc, MS, ATC, '03**, professor, athletic training, graduated from the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Course Design Institute.

**Maria Centeno-Vazquez, PhD, CCC-SLP, BCS-S**, associate professor and director, speech-language pathology, graduated from the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Course Design Institute.

**Rachel Geoghegan, DAT, MSHRD**, assistant professor, athletic training, graduated from the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Course Design Institute.

**Sunna Khokhar** was promoted to clinical student coordinator for the Physician Assistant Studies department.

**Ivonne Maldonado de La Rosa, PhD, MS, CCC-SLP**, assistant professor, speech-language pathology, was named one of the 2024 recipients of the Distinguished Early Career Professional Certificate from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

**Malathy Venkatesh, PhD, CCC-SLP**, assistant professor, speech-language pathology, completed the Teaching & Learning Center's Level Up! certificate program to become an ATSU-certified health sciences educator.

### ATSU-CGHS

**Lihua Dishman, DBA, FACHE**, associate professor, health administration, was presented with the ACHE Service Award by the Midwest Chapter of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). The award recognizes Dr. Dishman's commitment to the healthcare management profession through her activities and services furthering professional excellence.

**Jodi Gamm, MBA**, enrollment manager, graduated from the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Course Design Institute.

**Jaana Gold, DDS, PhD, MPH, CPH**, professor, public health, received a scholarship to attend the Florida Policy Summit in Sarasota.

**Marisa Hastie, EdD, MS, ACSM EP-C, PN-1, FACS**, dean, was appointed chair of the American College of Sports Medicine's Ethics Committee for a three-year term. Additionally, Dr. Hastie was accepted as a peer reviewer by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Peer reviewer training will begin in 2025 with new HLC standards taking effect in September 2025.

**Eric Matthews, PhD, MS**, was named chair of the Doctor of Health Sciences program.

### ATSU-CHC

**Philip DaVisio, DMSc, MS, PA-C, CAQ-EM, '19**, assistant professor, physician assistant studies, was appointed to the Physician Assistant Board by California Gov. Gavin Newsom. He has been a supervisory physician assistant and hospital lead physician assistant at Kaiser Permanente since 2016 and assistant professor at ATSU-CHC since 2021. Dr. DaVisio is a member of the Society of Emergency Medicine Physician Assistants, California Academy of Physician Assistants, and American Academy of Physician Associates.

### ATSU-KCOM

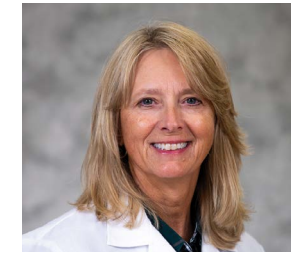
**Renu Agnihotri, MD**, associate professor, biochemistry, graduated from the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Course Design Institute.



Dr. Lihua Dishman, CGHS



Dr. Jaana Gold, CGHS



Dr. Jill Kerr, KCOM



Dr. Abdal Aziz Alfarrar, MOSDOH



Dr. Gustavo Fernandes, MOSDOH



Dr. Lawrence LeBeau, SOMA

**Sara Funk, DPT**, assistant professor, anatomy, received the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Innovation in Teaching for Learning Award for implementing the "First Patient Project" for first-year students in her gross anatomy course. The voluntary assignment led to nearly 100 creative projects that were then displayed at an art exhibition on the Missouri campus and at ATSU-KCOM's Gift of Body Ceremony reception. Read more about Dr. Funk's assignment on Page 42.

**Jill Kerr, DO, '86**, was named director of ATSU Kirksville Family Medicine.

**Whitney Marrs** is the new curriculum coordinator for Medical Education.

**Sumitra Miriyala, PhD, MBA, MPH, FAHA**, associate professor, anatomy, was selected by the Society for Science's 2024-25 Advocate Program. The program offers training, stipends, and year-round support to STEM educators and mentors helping students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds enter research fairs and competitions.

**Dana Nelson, MA**, executive director, advancement of osteopathic education, was selected for the inaugural American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Graduate Medical Education Development Fellowship.

### ATSU-MOSDOH

**Abdal Aziz Alfarrar, BDS, DDS, MSc**, assistant professor, clinical education, graduated from the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 Course Design Institute.

**Gustavo Fernandes, DDS, DMD, PhD, MSc, MSD**, associate professor and specialty care unit assistant director, clinical education, received the Teaching & Learning Center's 2024 second runner-up Innovation in Teaching for Learning Award for the project "Innovating for an Accurate Diagnosis in Periodontics."

**Ana Niehoff, DDS**, was promoted to assistant professor of clinical education at the St. Louis Dental Center.

### ATSU-SOMA

**Lawrence LeBeau, DO**, chair, graduate medical education, was selected for the inaugural American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Graduate Medical Education Development Fellowship.

Submit faculty & staff news to  
stillmagazine@atsu.edu

*Still Magazine* remembers those who have passed away and extends deepest sympathies to their families and friends. Visit [stillmagazine.atsu.edu](http://stillmagazine.atsu.edu) to read full-length obituaries.

### 1950s

**Edward J. Lurie, DO, '55**  
Dec. 17, 2024  
Seminole, Florida

**Gus J. Mazzola, DO, '56**  
Sept. 24, 2023  
Loch Arbour, New Jersey

**Arthur M. Dumke Jr., DO, '57**  
Sept. 12, 2024  
Stowe, Ohio

### 1960s

**Charles R. Leidheiser, DO, '61**  
Aug. 4, 2024  
Aiken, South Carolina

**Eldon D. Brandt, DO, '64**  
Sept. 18, 2024  
Jacksonville, Florida

**Arthur C. Schenck, DO, '64**  
Aug. 15, 2023  
Erie, Pennsylvania

**Robert Y. Fong, DO, '65**  
Oct. 29, 2024  
Irving, Texas

**Richard H. Wilterdink, DO, '66**  
Oct. 7, 2024  
Cortland, Ohio

**Joseph O. Hoffman, DO, '68**  
July 13, 2024  
Brandenburg, Kentucky

**Stephen A. Kardos, DO, '68**  
Nov. 10, 2024  
Jensen Beach, Florida

### 1970s

**Jerry M. Hancock, DO, '71**  
April 30, 2024  
Seymour, Indiana

**Wayne R. Hudson, DO, '73**  
June 14, 2024  
Lamar, Colorado

**Gary A. Lease, DO, '74**  
Aug. 10, 2024  
York, Pennsylvania

**Allan J. Stein, DO, '76**  
April 1, 2024  
Lake Mary, Florida

**William J. Dryden, DO, '79**  
July 10, 2024  
Camdenton, Missouri

### 1980s

**Daniel A. Lewis, DO, '80**  
Aug. 25, 2024  
Battlefield, Missouri

**Gilbert M. Rogers, DO, '81**  
Sept. 16, 2024  
Enid, Oklahoma

**Jeffrey K. Pearson, DO, '83**  
Aug. 4, 2024  
Carlsbad, California

**Jeffrey F. Fullenkamp, DO, '84**  
Nov. 18, 2024  
West Des Moines, Iowa

**Orren Beaty III, DO, '88**  
Oct. 28, 2024  
Asheville, North Carolina

### 1990s

**Dale E. Alsager, DO, '94**  
Aug. 10, 2024  
Gibsons, British Columbia,  
Canada

### Faculty, staff & friends

**Michael A. McManis, PhD**  
Dec. 12, 2024  
Springfield, Missouri

**John T.A. McRae, MS**  
March 10, 2023  
Nashville, Tennessee

## In memory of President Emeritus W. Jack Magruder, EdD, DHL (hon.), '22

Aug. 7, 1935–Nov. 17, 2024

ATSU's 11th president, Dr. W. Jack Magruder, passed away Sunday, Nov. 17, 2024, in Kirksville, Missouri. A native of northeast Missouri, Dr. Magruder earned his bachelor's degree in chemistry and mathematics from Northeast Missouri State Teachers College (now Truman State University), where he also met his wife, Sue, in 1954. They married shortly after and shared a lifetime of partnership and devotion. Mrs. Sue Magruder preceded Dr. Magruder in death on May 29, 2021.

Dr. Magruder began his career at Truman State University in 1964 as an assistant professor of chemistry. He later advanced to professor, head of the Division of Science, and eventually, vice president for academic affairs. In 1994, he became Truman's 13th president, leading with distinction. He was granted the titles of president emeritus and professor emeritus of chemistry before he retired in 2003.

His career included numerous leadership roles in higher education, including president of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges and chair of the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education Committee on Transfer and Articulation. He also served on the Board of Trustees for The Higher Learning Commission and as president of the Truman State University Foundation Board.

Dr. Magruder's academic accomplishments were equally impressive. He earned a master's degree from the University of Northern Iowa and a doctorate from the University of Northern Colorado. He then completed graduate work at Louisiana State University and Harvard University's Institute of Educational Management. In 2002, he received an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from ATSU's Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Before becoming ATSU's president, Dr. Magruder brought his visionary leadership and commitment to education as a member of the University's Board of Trustees. During his tenure as president from 2008-12, Dr. Magruder was instrumental in founding ATSU's Missouri School of Dentistry & Oral Health. Dr. and Mrs. Magruder were granted



Top: Dr. W. Jack Magruder, bottom: Dr. Magruder with wife, Sue.

president emeritus and first lady emerita statuses during Dr. Magruder's retirement reception in June 2012.

"Dr. Magruder will be deeply missed by colleagues, students, alumni, and friends," said ATSU Chancellor Craig M. Phelps, DO, '84. "His legacy of dedication and service to ATSU and higher education will endure through the lives he touched."

**California commencement**

ATSU's College for Health Communities in Santa Maria, California, celebrated 82 graduates of the Central Coast Physician Assistant program on Friday, Sept. 13.





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