

# THE SOHP BEAT

SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Applied Behavior Analysis  
Diagnostic Medical imaging  
Health informatics  
Midwifery  
Occupational Therapy  
Physical Therapy  
Physician Assistant  
Medical Billing & Coding

## Dean's Welcome

Welcome to the School of Health Professions (SOHP) 2025 Winter edition of the SOHP Beat! As we welcome in the new year, let us take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments and milestones of the past year. In this edition, we celebrate our achievements, share stories of resilience and hope, and look forward to the opportunities and challenges that 2025 will bring.

In the SOHP, our array of programs offers an option for individuals to become healthcare professionals no matter their level of preparedness at admission. In the SOHP, individuals can be admitted to become a healthcare professional with a high school diploma, and undergraduate degree or a graduate degree. This versatility makes our programs truly accessible to a broad spectrum of individuals in Brooklyn, the greater New York area, and beyond. Ultimately, all SOHP healthcare programs educate healthcare professionals to deliver excellent healthcare services by enhancing their scientific competence and nurturing their humane spirit.

The eight programs of the School of Health Professions (SOHP)—Applied Behavior Analysis, Diagnostic Medical Imaging, Health Informatics, Medical Billing and Coding, Midwifery, and Occupational Therapy with the opportunity to complete the Post Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Physician Assistant <https://tinyurl.com/3uae2jjv>—are essential components of The SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University's comprehensive academic and clinical enterprise. These programs work harmoniously with the university's other schools and colleges, including the Colleges of Medicine and Nursing, as well as the Schools of Graduate Studies and Public Health. This interdisciplinary environment fosters collaboration, innovation, and excellence in education, research, and clinical practice. By integrating the SOHP programs within the broader university community, The SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University provides students with a rich and dynamic learning environment that prepares them for successful careers in healthcare. This collaboration also enables the university to tackle the complex healthcare needs of the community, promote healthcare equity, and advance the healthcare field through research and discovery.

SOHP takes pride in offering its students a well-rounded education to prepare them for thriving careers in their respective fields of study. Hosting events like the Career and Networking Event (CANE) and the Interprofessional Case Study (ICS) showcases SOHP's commitment to experiential learning, interprofessional education, and enhanced student learning experiences, all to optimize career readiness.

## Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Program

The Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) at the SOHP equips students to address complex behavioral needs across diverse populations and settings using behavioral interventions. Our program is grounded in evidence-based strategies and prepares future behavior analysts to design, implement, and evaluate interventions that promote positive change in clinical contexts. With increasing demand for skilled ABA professionals nationwide and in New York state, our graduates are poised to immediately impact patient care and quality of life—particularly for individuals who are neurodiverse. We invite you to explore this new program in SOHP and help us to get the word out to attract new students to this dynamic and growing field.

If you're interested in ABA and want to learn more before applying, click here: <https://tinyurl.com/4dwm83nn>

## Diagnostic Medical Imaging (DMI)

The Diagnostic Medical Imaging Program at the SOHP is recognized for its comprehensive education, cutting-edge technology, and commitment to cultivating skilled and compassionate imaging specialists over the last 53 years. The curriculum provides students with substantial clinical exposure, allowing graduates to employ sophisticated imaging equipment adeptly as practicing sonographers. Students collaborate with colleagues from other healthcare disciplines to foster a collaborative approach to patient care. The faculty comprises experienced professionals who assist students in attaining their academic and professional goals. This program was established to address the high national and regional demand for proficient imaging specialists, and our program prepares a significant proportion of sonographers from underrepresented communities.

Educating proficient and compassionate sonographers enhances the quality of patient care and health outcomes. Our graduates are preparing students to be able to specialize in obstetrics and gynecology, adult echocardiography, and vascular and abdominal sonographers once they pass the applicable national registry examination.



The Class of 2024 is already off to a remarkable start, with 100% of graduates earning credentials. This group includes seven Registered Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, 12 Registered Diagnostic Cardiac Sonographers, and two Registered Vascular Technologist.

These exceptional results reflect the dedication and hard work of our students and the unwavering commitment of our faculty to their success. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all graduates for their outstanding accomplishments.



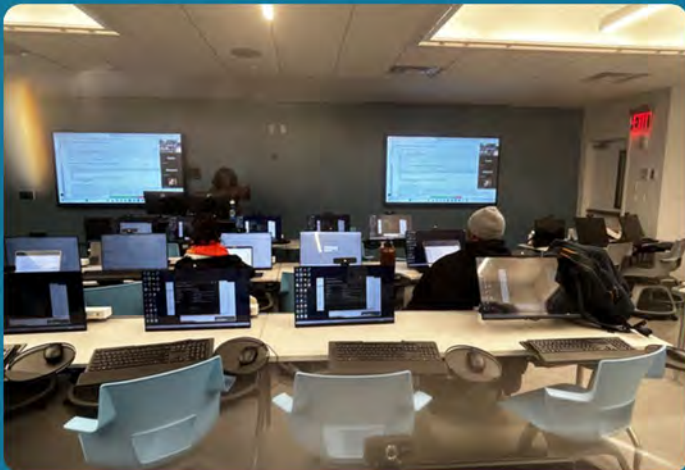
## Health Informatics (HI) Program

After many years of collaborative effort by the Dean, the faculty and staff of the Health Informatics program, and the Downstate administration, the Health Informatics Lab (formerly the Medical Informatics Lab) has undergone a complete renovation and is now open for campus use. The construction was completed in December 2024, and the lab became available later that same month.

The newly renovated HI Lab is equipped with 50 state-of-the-art computers, each loaded with all the necessary software for HI students and other software and resources for the broader campus community. The lab also features cutting-edge audio-visual technologies, including an instructor station with dual monitors connected to two large Promethean boards, multiple ceiling-mounted speakers for enhanced audio, and front and back cameras to support online participation. Access to the lab is controlled via a new ID card reader system available to students and faculty.

The HI Lab serves as the primary classroom for the HI program, primarily hosting evening classes. However, it is also available to HI students during the day when no events are scheduled. Additionally, the lab is a key resource for the campus community and can be reserved through Classroom Services for daytime and weekend use. As the number of distance learning students continues to grow, this advanced, technology-equipped lab will play a crucial role in supporting in-person and online HI education.

If you're interested in using technology to enhance healthcare and want to learn more before applying, please visit our website at: <https://tinyurl.com/4x3ah425>



## Medical Billing and Coding

We are delighted to share some exciting developments in our Medical Billing and Coding program. AI-powered coding systems are becoming pervasive in workplaces, assisting with data extraction from medical records and applying appropriate codes. Even with this growing technology focus in the profession, it will not replace the need for well-trained humans to remain in the driver's seat. For example, there is still a strong emphasis in the field on developing critically essential skills like communication, teamwork, ethical reasoning, integrity, and protecting patient confidentiality.

As technology continues to shape billing and coding practices, we are ramping up using interactive case studies to help students develop more profound insights into clinical documentation and compliance with coding guidelines. We have also expanded the internship placement opportunities to now include the clinics at The SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University to increase students' career readiness and potentially enhance their employability and productivity.

We applaud the Brooklyn Children's Society (BCS) at Downstate for providing \$17,500.00 in scholarship funds to cover tuition costs for five students in the program. The BCS' continuing commitment to improving and enriching the lives of children in the borough allowed these parents to advance their careers and ensure more equitable outcomes for their children. Three of these scholarship beneficiaries have secured employment pending certification in the fall of this year.

Medical Billing and Coding alumni, we encourage you to contact us with updates on your career journey. We would love to feature you in future issues of this newsletter. We also encourage our students and alumni to join us as we establish a Community Advisory Board to shape the future of our Medical Billing and Coding program.

To learn more about our Medical Billing and Coding program, visit the website at: <https://tinyurl.com/4bw4nmwu>

## Midwifery (MW) Program

The Midwifery program at SUNY Downstate's SOHP is committed to positively impacting maternal and infant health in Brooklyn and beyond. By training new generations of MWs, they address the critical need for healthcare services in our community that reduce disparities and enhance maternal and infant health outcomes, morbidity and mortality rates.

The MW program continues to work diligently toward improvements. For example, the MW team is excited to have implemented curriculum adjustments that have shortened the program's duration and enhanced its overall educational offerings. Through this effort, they have addressed previously identified knowledge gaps, receiving positive feedback from students and graduates.



The SOHP was proud to celebrate the Midwifery class of 2026 during the Blessing of the Hands/White Coat Ceremony, marking the students' entry into clinical practice. The ceremony occurred on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at the Alumni Auditorium. This special event signified our MW students' transition from learners to practitioners dedicated to providing competent and compassionate care. The students were pinned and donned the symbolic white coats. This powerful ceremony serves as a reminder of the MW's role as a guardian of life, a supporter of women's autonomy, and an advocate for social justice.

## Physical Therapy (DPT) Program

The SOHP Physical Therapy (PT) program is dedicated to producing competent and sympathetic physical therapists who influence positive changes in individuals and communities. Our students are enthusiastic campaigners and exceptional learners. They see the need to develop healthcare policies that improve accessibility, fairness, and quality. The PT program helps students to be agents of positive transformation in society and healthcare by combining clinical rigor with advocacy and action.

Our students engage legislators to advance the shared interests of patients, families, and the physical therapy field. We hope their lobbying activities will improve the understanding of physical therapists' vital contribution to healthcare. This might help to shape policies influencing patient care and service availability. This advocacy results in our PT students developing professionalism, leadership, and critical communication skills. Six third-year students interacted with their local representative on Lobby Day. They spoke with Christopher Gosley, the legislative aide for Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages.

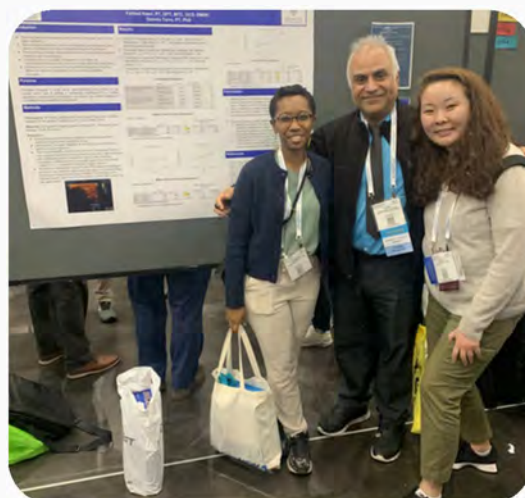
For more information about our Physical Therapy program, please visit the website at <https://www.downstate.edu/education-training/school-of-health-professions/programs/physical-therapy/index.html>.



Seven of the third-year students visited their local legislator as part of their Lobby Day experience. They spoke with Christopher Gosley, the legislative aide for Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages, and Assemblywoman for District 29, Alicia Hyndman



The Physical Therapy (PT) program celebrated National Physical Therapy Month by engaging with the Downstate community. First and second year PT students offered tips and literature on proper lifting techniques and improving the ergonomics of work and study environments. They also highlighted the benefits of physical therapy in addressing low back pain.



Dr. Farhad Haeri presented an Abstract poster "Can Neurodynamic Mobilization Affect Ulnar Nerve Cross-Sectional Area and be Reliably Measured By Sonography?" in collaboration with Dr. Dennis Torre on February 15, 2025, in Orthopaedics section; APTA Combined Section Meeting 2025, in Houston, Texas.



Dr. Loraine Antoine and Dr. Puneet Dhaliwal presented at the Physical Therapy Educational Leadership Conference in Oakland, CA. ELC is an engaging conference of networking and innovative education sessions that brings PT educators and clinicians from all over the nation together. The conference focuses on the latest research within the fields of PT and education, including PT assistant education. ELC strives to provide collaborative educational programming that is inclusive and enhances the diversity and representation of all groups in education sessions while specifically promoting PTA, clinician educator, and special interest groups. ELC allows faculty to share their expertise and experiences as a form of knowledge exchange.

## Physician Assistant (PA) Program

The Physician Assistant (PA) program is a crucial part of the SOHP at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University. One of the objectives of the PA program is to enhance healthcare outcomes in Brooklyn and other urban areas. Our PA program aims to reduce the apparent differences in access to healthcare in urban settings, where many poor and disadvantaged communities lack access to high-quality healthcare services. We do this by training a culturally diverse group of students who are committed to providing compassionate treatment that promotes health equity.

The education and skills our faculty share with our students will benefit the next generation of healthcare providers. The SOHP PA program continues to encourage students in Brooklyn schools to pursue careers in the healthcare field through outreach activities and partnerships with local high schools. PA faculty members offer these students mentorship, shadowing opportunities, and hands-on training to help inspire them to become the next generation of healthcare leaders.

If you are interested in making a difference in medical services, consider enrolling in our PA program. You will become part of a lively community of scholars and practitioners dedicated to improving healthcare outcomes in Brooklyn and beyond by providing high-quality healthcare and education to our patients.

For more information about our Physician Assistant program, visit the website at: <https://tinyurl.com/44ftbwbv>



## Occupational Therapy (OT) Program

The Occupational Therapy program announces the approval of our new 24-month MS OT curriculum, a significant reduction from the previous 30 months. We will welcome our first class under the new 24-month program in Fall 2025. Faculty and staff are diligently working to implement the new curriculum, ensuring our students continue to receive a high-quality and affordable education.

Our OT student clubs have been incredibly active this semester, fostering community and making a real impact. Their initiatives include a Backpack Awareness program in local schools, educating students on proper backpack use. They also organized a Winter Essentials Drive for the Asiyah Women's Center, supporting women and families facing homelessness and domestic violence. Finally, their Multicultural Holiday Bash celebrated the diverse backgrounds within our program. We immensely appreciate our students' dedication and commitment to serving others.

On February 10, 2025, the OT program inducted 17 outstanding Master's students from the Class of 2025 into Pi Theta Epsilon, the national honor society for OT. The induction ceremony was a joyous occasion, bringing together students, faculty, and families to celebrate the students' academic excellence. The event also served as a reminder of the profound impact of the OT profession and the exciting possibilities that lie ahead for these future practitioners.



We're also excited to connect with our program alumni and friends at the AOTA 2025 conference in Philadelphia! Finally, join us for our Student and Alumni Reception on Thursday, April 3rd, from 6 to 8 p.m. It's a fantastic opportunity to network and celebrate our program's successes.

For more information on our Occupational Therapy program, please visit the website at <https://www.downstate.edu/education-training/school-of-health-professions/programs/occupational-therapy/index.html>

## Post-Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (PP-OTD)

The Post-Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (PP-OTD) at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University empowers practicing occupational therapists to advance their research, leadership, and policy expertise in the field. The program equips current OT professionals to address complex challenges in healthcare, education, and community settings especially at the macro-level. The PP-OTD prepares graduates to lead transformative initiatives that enhance patient care, promote health equity, and improve the quality of life for individuals and communities. Join us in shaping the future of OT and making a lasting impact locally and globally.

Ready to take your occupational therapy career to the next level? Learn more and apply to our PP-OTD program by visiting our website at: <https://tinyurl.com/3mwkk9u2>

## "Alumni News: Stay Connected and Inspired!"

**I am Dorine Cooper, MS Health/Medical Informatics Program, Class of 2024.** I am currently the Associate Administrator in the School of Public Health at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University and a mentor in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) program with the New York Academy of Sciences. The memories that stand out to me are the comradery among classmates from all areas of healthcare who had a strong sense of community and the unwavering support from faculty and staff. My advice to you, current students and recent graduates, is not to focus on one area in Health Informatics. Cultivate a strong understanding of all three pillars: Healthcare, Technology, and Data Science. The more comfortable you become with the three pillars, the more valuable you are to your community. Lean on each other for support, encouragement, and shared understanding. Form study groups for collaborative projects. Knowing you're not alone in the journey is encouraging.



**I am Louisa Farr, OT, MS, Occupational Therapy, Class of 2020.** I am a PRN OT (an as-needed OT) at a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) in North Carolina and I facilitate OT-based life skills workshops at my local jail and Recovery Court. I am currently starting a non-profit called BrightPath that offers life skills training to people in recovery both behind bars and outside.

The memories that stand out for me were the cadaver lab the first semester, and how amazing it was to learn from and dissect a real person. Another was group studies and how I got to know my classmates deeply from spending hours in the library and over dining tables working on projects together. An unforgettable moment was graduating from Carnegie Hall and walking across the stage after finishing school, one of the most challenging things I have ever done.

My advice to current students and recent graduates is to don't give up. Achieving your degree is a journey with many peaks and valleys. The highs and lows will make your victory taste sweeter when you finally get the degree. It is worth it for the rewarding work of caring for people as your vocation.



**I am Sean Thomas, PT, DPT, Physical Therapy Program, Class of 2011.** I'm the Clinical Director of the JAG One Physical Therapy office and Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion. I am the CEO of Be More Today, a Health and Wellness company determined to help ordinary people do extraordinary things. I am also the author of two books, Be More Today and Project More. For more information, please visit my website, [www.bemoretoday.com](http://www.bemoretoday.com).



My favorite memories from Downstate are playing basketball with the combined PT/OT team and beating the medical students in the winter intramural tournament in 2009 and 2011. My advice to current students and recent graduates is that compassion is something that can't be taught in any class but truly separates good clinicians from great clinicians. Let's be more compassionate today.

**I am Leah Orbach Herkowitz, OT MS, Class of 2010.** I have fond memories of my time in OT school. Downstate prepared me for my career as an Occupational Therapist.

What is unique about the schooling and training is that I was prepared for and have worked across several age groups and subspecialties. My first job involved working with geriatrics in skilled nursing facilities. I now work for the Department of Education with students from 3 K through Middle school. I also began providing early intervention services several years ago. I felt prepared for all my jobs from my time at Downstate and the excellent fieldwork opportunities I was provided with.



I advise current students to be open to all options after graduation and not be afraid to switch paths. The future is bright and has many excellent opportunities to embrace! Best of luck to all graduates!

**I am Olivia Cooper, MS, Medical Informatics Class of 2015.** I am currently the Epic Principal Trainer/Instructional Designer at the Hospital for Special Surgery. I had the privilege of engaging in community service, where I taught HTML coding and website development to family, friends, and local community members in our computer lab. This was an incredibly fulfilling experience, especially since many of the people in my life didn't fully understand the nature of my studies. It provided a unique opportunity to share my new skills with others while helping them create functional and creative websites in just a short amount of time. I also had the chance to speak with young students visiting from a local high school.

At the time, I was enrolled in a usability class with Dr. Chief, which profoundly impacted my approach to usability. I connected with the students by discussing a topic they could relate to—video games. I asked them how many played video games and used their experiences to illustrate how usability principles are applied in game design, development, and the background processes that shape the user experience. This conversation deepened my understanding of user-centric design, emphasizing the importance of minimizing clicks and ensuring intuitive button placement. These lessons have stayed with me and continue to guide my work as I strive to improve the user experience for those I train and collaborate with.



Another rewarding experience was partnering with students from the Physician Assistant program to visit the Boys and Girls Club during the holiday season. Having lived in the neighborhood all my life, I was familiar with the club but had never actually stepped inside. Having grown up in the neighborhood, I knew about the club but had never actually been there. It was considered a luxury to attend when I was younger. This experience felt like fulfilling something I had always wanted to do while simultaneously giving back to the children of the club. I even ran into an old student of mine from when I worked at a school.

My advice to current students and recent graduates:

Focus on User-Centered Design, fight the Imposter Syndrome, build relationships, embrace the perspective you bring as a newcomer because it is just as important, and keep learning!

**I am Rebecca Serrano, B.S., RDMS, RDCS, Diagnostic Medical Imaging Program, Class of 2008.** I am currently a lead sonographer in maternal-fetal medicine. My experience at SOHP challenged me and allowed me to face my fears of the unknown. Some of the memories that stand out to me include going to different clinical sites for shadowing. I came from a very small town in Washington State and took the leap to attend school in Brooklyn. Going into such large medical facilities and experiencing the different modalities of ultrasound was fascinating for me. Other memorable moments include heading to the cafeteria with classmates to review questions we remembered after exams and discussing what we thought we got right or wrong. Another memory was scanning each other in the lab, repeatedly looking at kidneys and the liver/gallbladder, as those were all I could "see" for so many months. My most vivid memory, however, was walking across the stage at Carnegie Hall to receive my degree. Never in a million years did I nor others think that this small-town girl, who had to fight for grades to get into Downstate, would graduate with a bachelor's degree in New York at Carnegie Hall!

This advice may be repetitive, but never give up! This applies to school, taking boards, and diving into your career. Along with perseverance, never stop learning. Ultrasound constantly evolves, with technological advancements revealing new anomalies and improving diagnostic capabilities. Be open and humble. My career has taken me from failing the SPI (Sonography Principles & Instrumentation Exam) to eventually passing it, earning my OB/GYN certification, and finally obtaining my fetal echocardiography credential.

I worked in maternal-fetal medicine for years before deciding to challenge myself and explore new opportunities in ultrasound. I contracted with Philips Healthcare to work in their R&D department on ultrasound systems. I contributed to the verification and validation of Lumify, and it was incredibly exciting to see that product released, knowing I played a part in its development. I then worked for Samsung as a clinical applications specialist for women's health on the West Coast. Now, I serve as a lead sonographer at a maternal-fetal medicine antenatal center. It has been such a rewarding, albeit challenging, journey for me. There is so much potential for the future of ultrasound, especially in women's health. I can't wait to see where my career takes me next, to watch what lies ahead for new graduates, and to see the contributions you all will make!



## Disability Awareness Conference

On January 23, 2025, SUNY Downstate hosted a Disability Awareness Conference sponsored by the SOHP and Downstate Marketing and Communications. The impetus for the conference was the fact that between one and three and one and four individuals in the United States have a disability (29% based on 2023 CDC data) and because healthcare providers typically need to elevate their knowledge of disability to deliver more effective services. Therefore, basic awareness of disability was the goal of this conference.

With his background as a disability educator and researcher, Dean Lewis assembled a conference program aimed at introducing the campus to the basics of disability. The topics covered at the conference were the definitions of disability (Americans with Disabilities Act, Social Security Administration, and the World Health Organization) along with the distinction between a health condition and a disability, models of disability, categories of disability, attitudes toward disability, and interventions for disability.

The half-day event also featured two panels, the first of which focused on what is happening at Downstate related to disability and the second panel addressed contemporary perspectives on disability, including family member and self-advocate perspectives. Two nationally known disability experts, Dr. Susanne Bruyere from Cornell University and Dr. John O'Neil from the Kessler Foundation participated on the second panel.

The conference was in person with the option to view it via Livestream with approximately 100 participants total in both formats. The conference evaluations indicated that the conference was well received and the information appreciated. The conference seemed to be a resounding success. We are giving thought to how often we will host such a conference going forward and what the theme of the next disability conference will be.

It just so happens that this year's SOHP Dean's Lecture Series is on the topic of "Disability 101 for Healthcare Providers."

For more information on the remaining lectures in the series this year for February, March, April, and May, contact Franchon Jackson in the Dean's Office (718-270-7701 / [Franchon.jackson@downstate.edu](mailto:Franchon.jackson@downstate.edu)).

<https://www.downstate.edu/education-training/school-of-health-professions/events.html>



**COMING SOON**

DMI Advisory Board Meeting: Monday,  
March 17, 2025

SOHP Career and Networking Event: Tuesday,  
March 25, 2025, 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm

SOHP Interprofessional Case Study: Thursday,  
March 27, 2025, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

SOHP Research Day: Thursday, May 8, 2025,  
10:00 am to 3:00 pm

SOHP Convocation Ceremony: Thursday, May 8,  
2025, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

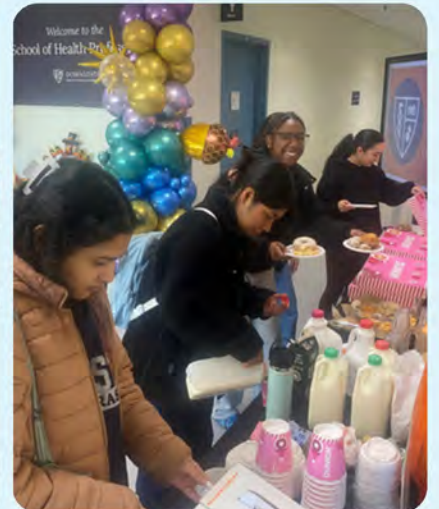
Class of 2025 Commencement:  
Tuesday, May 20, 2025

“Did you blink? Here’s what you missed!”

SOHP-TACULAR EVENT



SOHP FALL 2024 WELCOME BREAKFAST



“Did you blink? Here’s what you missed!”

SOHP PRE FALL 2024 FINAL EXAMS BREAKFAST



SOHP VALENTINE’S SWEET TREATS DAY

