



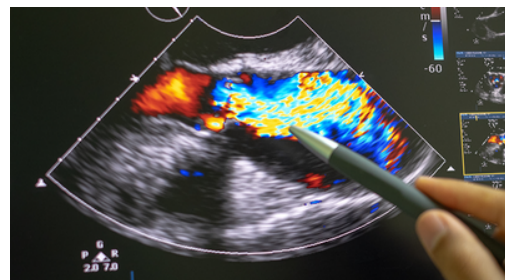
### Spring/Summer Newsletter 2024

The School of Health Professions (SOHP) continues to commit to excellence in education. We embrace the spirit of disciplined inquiry and learning. Our SOHP community is respected for its creative school events and in-demand academic offerings. In this newsletter, we'll examine the achievements, and activities that showcase the SOHP's distinctive attributes. Whether you're a student, staff, faculty member, or an alum, let us reflect on our school's latest news, highlights, and accomplishments.

This year saw the introduction of both the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) MS degree and our post-professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (PP-OTD) programs. We are happy to announce that eight health professions programs are now available in our school: Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Diagnostic Medical Imaging (DMI), Health Informatics (HI), Medical Billing and Coding (MBC), Midwifery (MW), Occupational Therapy (OT), Physical Therapy (PT), and Physician Assistant (PA). This array of programs affords an opportunity (i.e., a programmatic option) for an individual who comes to us with any educational background (high school diploma, associate's degree or two years toward an undergraduate degree, undergraduate degree, or graduate degree) to become a health professional.

With the addition of two new health profession programs in the SOHP, one can expect an enhanced interprofessional learning experience, increased enrollment and diversity of students, expanded research opportunities and innovations in healthcare, and increased opportunities for networking between students and alumni from various healthcare disciplines. These new programs will bring fresh perspectives, ideas, and energy to the school, further solidifying its role as a leader in healthcare education, interprofessional learning, and innovation.

[CLICK ON THE IMAGES TO LEARN MORE](#)



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

The SOHP post-professional occupational therapy doctorate (PP-OTD) is a fully online program designed to enhance student's ability to critically analyze research, effectively lead and manage organizations, and advocate for and implement change within existing delivery systems. The program consists of six core courses focusing on these areas, delivered through synchronous and asynchronous online offerings.

Students also engage in a two-course sequence to complete a capstone project. The capstone project involves identifying a problem, developing a proposal, implementing a solution, and evaluating its effectiveness in addressing a practice challenge. This project can be based on the student's workplace, community setting, volunteer site, or a larger context study. Additionally, students can choose three courses from two elective tracks to deepen their knowledge in a specialized practice area. The 33-credit program can be completed in 4-6 semesters and it pairs students with individual mentors to support their career goals and future vision.



**Suzanne Rappaport, OTD, OTR/L (she/her)**  
**Coordinator of the PP-OTD Program and Assistant Professor in the Occupational Therapy Program**

**Achieve the next level in Occupational Therapy. We are now accepting applications.**

**[Click here to learn more](#)**

## Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Program

The Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program is SOHP's other new addition. Behavior Analysis is the science of behavior that spans three domains: philosophy (behaviorism), basic research (the experimental analysis of behavior), and applied research (applied behavior analysis—ABA). Behavior-analytic scientists have conducted thousands of studies to identify the laws of behavior; that is, the predictable ways in which behavior is learned and changes over time. An underlying theme to this work is that a primary driver of behavior is its circumstances. As such, the unit of analysis in behavior analytic work—the way behavior analysts view the world—is through the relation between what happens before behavior, or what you might think of as “context”, the behavior, and the consequences of behavior (the effect behavior has on the environment and others).

Behavior analysts use this worldview to develop approaches for analyzing and changing behavior, and ultimately, to improve lives. The success in improving lives, particularly for individuals with an autism spectrum disorder, and other persons with neurodevelopmental disabilities, has led to the rapid advancement in the professionalization of the field of ABA. The development of the ABA program at Downstate reflects this development.

Students enrolling in the ABA program at Downstate have the option of a 36- or 42-credit MS degree program. This program will expose students to behavior analysis' conceptual, basic, and applied domains through coursework and practicum requirements. Students can expect a rich educational

environment that will develop their knowledge and skills related to basic principles; addressing a range of behavioral concerns (designing, implementing, and evaluating assessment, intervention, and consultation approaches); functioning as an ethical, professional, and culturally competent professional; and much more.



Upon graduation, individuals educated in the ABA program will be positioned to become Board-Certified Behavior Analysts® and Licensed Behavior Analysts. Program graduates will enter one of the fastest-growing workforces in the United States and should expect employment options spanning the public and private sectors. And, graduates will contribute to addressing a shortage of behavior analysts in New York State, specifically Kings County, and provide life-changing services to the service recipients they serve.

[Click here to learn more about becoming a Behavior Analyst](#)

**Jason C. Vladescu, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA(NY), NCSP**  
**Chair & Professor, Applied Behavior Analysis Program**

## Medical Billing and Coding

As the future of healthcare professions continues to evolve, consider enrolling in our Medical Billing and Coding program. This low-cost certificate program equips one with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in this high-demand field. Our comprehensive curriculum satisfies the requirements for certification by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), and the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC). Core courses include Medical Terminology, Anatomy and Physiology, Pathophysiology/Pharmacology, Health Insurance Reimbursement procedures, Health Insurance regulations, and the coding systems (ICD-10, CPT, HCPCS, and ICD-10 CM/PCS).

***The benefits of becoming a medical billing and coding professional are:***

- Flexible schedules and online options that accommodate busy lifestyles
- Expert instruction from experienced professionals in the field
- Hands-on training using industry-standard software and coding manuals
- Internship, limited job placement opportunities, and networking experiences to help kickstart one's career
- Earning a competitive living wage.



**Lynette E. Hinds, EdD, RN**  
**Clinical Assistant Professor**

**Director Medical Billing and Coding**  
**Program**

[Click here to learn more](#)



Health Information Management leaders anticipate that improvements in Electronic Health Records (EHR), advances in medical billing technology, and computer-assisted coding (CAC) will significantly cut healthcare costs, lead to fewer errors, improve turn-around time for reimbursement, and revolutionize how health information is managed.

Take the first step - enroll now and open the way for a bright future in Health Information Management by becoming a Medical Billing and Coding professional.

## Interprofessional Education (IPE)

Given the range of healthcare programs that SOHP offers, the inclusion of interprofessional education (IPE) in our course offerings and school-wide educational experiences continues to be an efficient way for students to gain vital skills in teamwork, problem-solving, and effective communication across discipline lines.

Within SOHP, students from multiple healthcare disciplines come together for an IPE learning experience. Such an experience is often transformative in recognizing the complementary worldviews and skills that different disciplines bring to the table to provide quality services to service recipients. To improve health outcomes, handle complex health concerns, and provide patient-centered care, IPE trains future healthcare workers in cooperation, communication, and mutual respect, which are key ingredients for effective clinical services. These skills will ultimately improve patient care and result in a more harmonious workforce in healthcare.

On March 21, 2024, the SOHP held its Sixth Annual Interprofessional Case Study event, in partnership with the College of Nursing and the School of Public Health. The event, in which more than 160 students participated online and in person, demonstrated the significance of health professionals collaborating in teams and working across disciplines to enhance patient care.

The case for this year's event focused on a 58-year-old African-American woman who lived in the local Brooklyn community around Downstate. She complained of periodic urinary incontinence, sporadic back pain, and discomfort after sexual activity. She went to her primary care physician (white male) out of worry, but the doctor rejected her concerns. Pelvic organ prolapse was ultimately determined to be the patient's diagnosis.

Our students found the example particularly intriguing since it reflected specific health concerns and an example of potential health inequity. It highlighted how ongoing health disparities result from healthcare practitioners frequently ignoring the health needs of marginalized populations. This realization was critical for the students because it made the connection between the experiences of specific patients and more significant systemic problems, highlighting the increasing need for healthcare that is delivered from a health equity perspective.





## SOHP Program-Specific Activities

### Occupational Therapy (OT) White Coat Ceremony

Our OT students held their White Coat Ceremony on April 19, 2024. That day, they made a significant turning point in their career objective of becoming OTs. The White Coat symbolizes their commitment to their work and to assisting others. It also signifies the faith that others have in them, the positive impact they will have on people's lives, and how they will positively influence their communities. The students were reminded to approach this responsibility with love, understanding, and compassion, and view it as a privilege.



April is OT month and we honored occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) for their amazing work, commitment, and contributions to people's lives and communities. OTPs enable individuals to overcome obstacles, become independent, and lead happy, fulfilling lives. Let's remember and honor the exceptional work that OTPs do in April and throughout the year!

### OT Students Inducted into National OT Honor Society

Congratulations to the 13 SOHP Class of 2024 OT students who were inducted into the Pi Theta Epsilon OT Honor Society's Alpha Kappa Chapter. Way to go, OT students!

### Occupational Therapy Students Continue to Make a Difference in the Community

The SOHP OT program recently hosted its annual Community Practice Exchange, showcasing the service-learning projects developed by second-year OT students. Under the guidance of Dr. Jasmin Thomas, OTD, OTR/L, BCP, Associate Professor, the Occupational Therapy Community Practice 3-semester sequence allows students to develop leadership skills through close collaboration with diverse community organizations.

This year, students partnered with a variety of organizations throughout New York, including religious institutions, minority-owned small businesses, senior centers, the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, and public schools serving children of all ages. Through these collaborations, students assessed the unique needs of each organization and created long-term projects grounded in OT theories and principles.

Examples of these impactful projects include "The Chance to Dance" at Bedazzle Dance Studio, "Grand Connections" at Edith and Carl Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst, "Empowering Hearts & Minds Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)" at the Islamic Center of Staten Island, and "Aging Gracefully with Chair Yoga" at the SUNY Downstate Special Treatment and Research (STAR) program. These projects highlighted the practical applications of OT and demonstrated the profound positive impact SUNY Downstate students can have on the health and well-being of community members.

Through these service-learning projects, SOHP OT students have demonstrated their dedication to community service and their ability to apply their academic knowledge in real-world settings, thereby making a significant difference in the lives of community members.

### **Spotlight on an Occupational Therapy Faculty Member**

Dr. Krystal Brewington, Assistant Professor, Certified Hand Therapist, and Occupational Therapist, hosted a two-part series on emerging practice areas in occupational therapy which featured The Real Virtual Reality System and the GripAble Augmented Reality Game Systems. These systems are both used as high-tech therapeutic modalities and in cognitive and physical rehabilitation. The sessions allowed first- and second-year occupational therapy students to participate in experiential learning activities as the product reps demonstrated how these technologies can be used with various patient populations. One of the new frontiers being developed is using virtual reality in therapy. Preparing students for clinical rotations and future employment in the field was a primary goal of the series. Dr. Brewington plans to host this VR series every year, thus allowing more students to explore cutting-edge practices in rehabilitation.

Dr. Brewington was profiled in the quarterly newsletter of the American Society for Hand Therapists (ASHT). She was selected for this feature because of her clinical expertise and mentorship of junior therapists nationwide who aspire to become certified hand therapists. Way to go Dr. Brewington!



**Dr. Krystal Brewington, OTD, OTR/L,  
CPAM, CHT (she/her)  
Assistant Professor Occupational  
Therapy Program**

### **Diagnostic Medical Imaging (DMI)**

Our Diagnostic Medical Imaging (DMI) program, the only undergraduate program at the SOHP, continues to shine! Our students and faculty are shattering expectations and pushing the boundaries of excellence in medical imaging education. On February 23, 2024, we celebrated the induction of six students of our DMI program into the New York Pi Chapter of Lambda Nu. We are incredibly proud of you! Congratulations on reaching this great degree of academic distinction.

Additionally, these students were acknowledged for their academic success, honor, and integrity—qualities



that should aid their professional growth and strengthen their leadership when they enter the workforce. It's reasonable to assume that this was just the start of many more accomplishments in the workplace for these individuals. We urged them to continue exhibiting their healthcare acumen, professionalism, social awareness, leadership, and morality. We are honored to be a leader in this field, preparing the next generation of imaging professionals to make a difference in patients' lives. Keep shining, DMI, and way to go DMI students!



**DMI Students who were inducted into the Lambda Nu Honor Society**

### **Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)**

Our Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program is dedicated to training the next generation of physical therapy leaders. Our students learn from expert faculty, engage in hands-on clinical experiences, and develop the skills to transform lives. Focusing on compassionate care, evidence-based practice, and innovative research, our graduates are prepared to make a meaningful impact on patients' lives and in the profession's future.

In advocating for a stronger future for physical therapists, our physical therapy students visited Capitol Hill in Washington DC, to lobby for the profession and champion the needs of patients and the community. They shared their stories, and passion to shape healthcare policy and advance their future profession. They vowed that together, they can make a difference and ensure access to quality care for all. They thanked their advocates and lawmakers for listening and supporting the PT profession's mission and joining them in helping to shape the future of physical therapy.

The DPT students of the Class of 2024 also met with their local legislators on behalf of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) of New York for a Physical Therapy Lobby Day event. They spoke to them about three upcoming bills that will affect patients who receive PT. They discussed the bills and provided them with information regarding APTA New York's stance on these bills. The bills included: Improving Direct Access to Physical Therapist Services; an act to amend the Workers' Compensation Law, that will allow physical therapy assistants (PTAs) to treat patients with Workers' Compensation; and an act to amend the insurance law, to limit co-payments for PT.



The five pictures below (Left to Right) show the following New York legislators or aides with Downstate PT students and a DPT student's visit to Washington, DC



Kerry Thelusmond, Chasity Duran, and Shamir Morrison visited with Council Member Mercedes Narcisse of the 46th Council District.



Allen Jacob and Duran Kasaj visited with Assembly Member Sam Pirozzolo of Assembly District 63. They met with his Chief of Staff.



Shaliza Ally, Johnnathan Martinez, and Annamaria Lombardi visited with Assembly Member Clyde Vanel of District 33. They met with Legislative Director, Tyler Fritzhand.



Anh-Tuan Tran, Jusmine Gabrielle Soriano, Randy Fang, Kingston Wong, and Yejin Kim had a meeting at Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn of District 42.



Matthew Zaharenios (R) DPT Class of 2025 at Capitol Hill, Washington, DC

UPCOMING  
EVENTS

- Fall 2024 New Students Orientation
- SOHP Council Welcome Breakfast for all students late September
- Career and Networking Fair – Fall 2024 or Spring 2025
- Interprofessional Clinical Case Study – Spring 2025

## Health Informatics

Our Health Informatics program is improving how we approach healthcare with technology innovation. We are bridging the gap between healthcare and technology, thus creating a brighter future for all. **Carl Conde of the Health Informatics Class of 2024**, participated in the 2024 International Emory Global Health Case Competition as a member of the Downstate Team and represented the SOHP. The interdisciplinary Downstate Team comprised selected representative students from the colleges and schools within Downstate. As stated on the organizer's (The Global Health Institute, Emory University) website, "Global Health Case Competition unites students from diverse disciplines and multiple nations to tackle a real-world global health challenge". The competition was held between March 14th and March 23, 2024, at the Emory University campus in Atlanta, GA. The event brought together students from 31 universities from across six continents who attempted to present solutions to the case challenge: Tackling India's Twindemic: Accelerating integrated diabetes mellitus-tuberculosis care to end TB. The Downstate Team earned an honorable mention at the completion for its outstanding contribution. The judging committee was surprised by Downstate's novel approach to solving India's Twindemic. The team members were commended for their ability to think outside of the box.

### Midwifery

Midwives play a crucial role in addressing perinatal health disparities and healthcare inequities by providing personalized and compassionate care to marginalized communities. Midwifery-led care models have been shown to provide safe care that helps to prevent maternal and neonatal deaths across the world (Commonwealth Fund, 2024).



### Midwifery Blessing of the Hands Ceremony

The Blessing of the Hands is an appropriate term that our midwifery students came up with to characterize their celebration of entrance into clinical practice. The ceremony was held on February 23, 2024, at the Alumni Auditorium. This special event marked our midwifery students' journey in moving from learners, into the role of caregivers who are dedicated to providing competent and compassionate care. As the students were pinned and/or cloaked in the symbolic white coat, we honored the trust placed in them to guide women through life's most precious moments; while they continue the sacred practice of midwifery.

***Because the students had many of their children in their photos we cannot publish them in this newsletter.***

***Congratulations to the midwifery students at their Blessing of the Hands Ceremony. Way to go!***

### Physician Assistant Students Recognize their Faculty and Staff

Recognizing the contributions and efforts of others is a thoughtful way to build a positive and inclusive community. During Black History Month, under the umbrella of "Black Excellence in Medicine," our physician assistant students took the time to express their gratitude to their professors and the PA program staff for their tireless efforts in shaping the next generation of healthcare professionals. The SOHP proudly acknowledges the PA students' thoughtful gesture because such appreciation can have a ripple effect, that inspires a culture of kindness, empathy, and compassion, ultimately benefitting their future service recipients.



## Physician Assistant Faculty Involvement in the EOP Mentorship Program

Dr. Jonathan Silver, Assistant Professor of the Physician Assistant Program, has been selected for the SUNY Diversity in Medicine Mentorship Award. He joins his colleagues from other SOHP programs serving as mentors committed to furthering diversity in medicine, under the direction of Dr. Carla Boutin-Foster. Dr. Silver began his role with enthusiasm agreeing to mentor two undergraduate students of the Pre-Medical Opportunity Program. He is honored to be a part of the EOP mentorship program here at Downstate Health Sciences University. He has been an Orthopedic Physician Assistant for over 20 years and the past 10 years as Chief Physician Assistant in Orthopedic Surgery at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn. He has had the opportunity to pass on his medical knowledge, and encourage, and motivate prospective students to consider this great profession. He enjoys speaking with young students about their educational paths and their decision to pursue a career in Physician Assistant. He has been very much involved in the EOP mentoring sector for students, and leading informational sessions for students interested in the PA program. Dr. Silver's joy for precepting PA students within the clinical settings as well as providing lectures to the students in the didactic phase of the SOHP PA program, make him an ideal mentor in the EOP Mentorship Program.



**Jonathan Silver, DMSc, MS, PA-C**  
**Assistant Professor Physician Assistant Program**

## Welcome to The SOHP

On May 28th, we welcomed a new cohort of students to our School of Health Professions family. Our new occupational therapy, physical therapy, and physician assistant students are eager to start their new academic journey and make a difference in the healthcare industry. We are excited to have them on board and look forward to seeing their growth and success. Welcome to the SOHP community!

The SOHP Student Council looks forward to joining you and the new fall 2024 students at the welcome breakfast they host for new summer and fall students. This breakfast is usually held early fall 2024 semester.

## SOHP Annual Research Day

Thank you to everyone who made the 2nd Annual SOHP Research Day on Thursday, May 2, 2024, a resounding success! To our presenters, your dedication to advancing healthcare through research was inspiring. Your research advances knowledge and has the potential to improve lives and shape the future of our respective healthcare professions. To our attendees, your engagement and enthusiasm make events like this thrive; your questions, insights, and feedback were invaluable. And to our event organizers, we appreciate your tireless efforts and support. Everyone's contributions made this event possible. Together, we are shaping the future of healthcare. Let us continue to push boundaries and make a difference through research.





### Faculty Recognition

Let us acknowledge our faculty members who are dedicated educators and researchers. Some faculty are practitioners who continually strive to advance their fields and bring those experiences to the classroom, enriching our academic community. We celebrate these truly exceptional individuals, renowned for their academic excellence, innovative research, and dedication to teaching and community service. They inspire and empower our students to become the next generation of leaders and change-makers. Their commitment to excellence and innovation is a testament to the SOHP's mission and values.

### SOHP's Administrative Professionals

Behind the scenes, SOHP Program Administrators work tirelessly to ensure the smooth operation of our programs. Their dedication, expertise, and attention to detail are invaluable to our school's success. From coordinating events and programs to providing student support, they are the unsung heroes of SOHP. Their hard work and commitment to excellence positively impacts our students' experiences and outcomes. We appreciate their tireless efforts, their positive attitude, and their unwavering commitment to our school's mission and values.

### Spring Final Exams Week Breakfast

The SOHP students got a chance to fuel up for their spring final exams! On Monday, April 29, 2024, the SOHP Student Council treated their counterparts to breakfast during spring final exams week. The students took a short break from studying to enjoy a healthy breakfast with their peers and professors. All of which helped them power through exams





## Messages from our Alumni

I am **Elizabeth Horvath, Physician Assistant Program, Class of 2018**. I am currently employed as an HIV/Primary Care Physician Assistant (MPAS, AAHIVS). I was able to be a participant in the HIV Track Primary Care program and work at Downstate's very own Special Treatment and Research (STAR) clinic and Health and Education Alternatives for Teens (HEAT) program. I have transitioned these experiences to help provide care for those living with HIV, treat sexually transmitted infections, prevent HIV, and provide gender-affirming care. My advice to you is to choose a career path that you are passionate about...it will feel less like work and more worthwhile.

I am **Christina Trinh, Occupational Therapy Program, Class of 2018**. I am currently employed as an Acute Care Hospital Occupational Therapist. I felt very prepared for my future work by going to Downstate. The topics we covered were practical and my fieldwork experiences were invaluable. My advice to you is to take this time to learn, enjoy, and explore. You will learn a lot on the job so don't feel like you need to get it right the first time. And have fun being in school! You won't get this time back.

I am **Alvin So, Doctor of Physical Therapy Class of 2018**. I am currently employed as a Senior Physical Therapist at Bellevue Hospital. I loved my class and I am grateful to have gone through the experience with them. It was a challenging experience and it was helpful that we all really worked together to support each other. My advice to you is you will get through this. Do not be in a rush to find a job. There are plenty of jobs and you will have the rest of your life to work. Don't worry if you don't know what kind of setting you want to work in. You will have many opportunities to explore. Take care of your health. We can't just talk about it, we have to be about it.

I am **Olubunmi Sonde, Medical Informatics Program, Class of 2007**. I am currently employed as a Senior Electronic Health Record Specialist. I entered the program when electronic health records (EHR) emerged. My experience at SUNY was great and the program offered me a way to enter and grow within the industry. My advice to you is, to realize you have chosen an exciting and impactful field. Every piece of work you do in medical informatics contributes to better healthcare. Stay focused, keep learning, attend conferences, and online forums, and participate in industry events.

I am **Sohraab Sobti, Medical Informatics Program, Class of 2014**. I am currently employed as an Expert Analyst/Cloud Architect for Research and Genomics at Northwell Health. SUNY Downstate School of Health Professions Medical Informatics program is an extremely valuable and economical educational pathway that provides great skills and connections in Health Tech. I am always looking for interns and have provided Northwell with about seven interns in the past who have ended up joining our team. If you want a bright future, SUNY Downstate is the place to go.



## Congratulations to the SOHP Class of 2024



We hope this newsletter has informed, inspired, and connected you with the people and stories that make the SOHP what it is today; a school that is shaping the future of healthcare. We are preparing healthcare professionals who are passionate about care, and who are learning today to be leaders tomorrow.

Thank you for taking the time to read this edition of the SOHP Beat and please look out for our fall/winter edition in January 2025.