

# What a year it has been

## THE YEAR OF COVID

Hello UConn Athletic Training Alumni and Friends!

We hope that this newsletter finds you all well, healthy, and ready for some much needed rest and relaxation. We are starting a bi annual newsletter with a brief overview of our program happenings.

Our program has officially transitioned from the Bachelor's Degree in Athletic Training to a Master of Science in Athletic Training. We graduated our last cohort in the Bachelors degree in the Spring of 2020. Our program consists of 60 credits completed in two years. We are in the process of updating our website and we encourage all of you to check it out!

We would love to highlight all of our wonderful alumni with "alumni spotlights" on our social media platforms and website. [Email](#) us with a short bio and a picture including the following information: The year you graduated, Your current job position, how UCONN AT prepared you to be in your current position, past positions you'd like to highlight, your favorite thing about the AT program and why people should choose UCONN. If you would like to receive emails directly from us please email us and let us know. Don't forget to follow us on Facebook & Instagram (@uconnAT) and Twitter (@uconnAT1).

We hope to see you all soon—fingers crossed for NATA!

Eleni

Eleni Diakogeorgiou, PhD, MBA, ATC  
Program Director

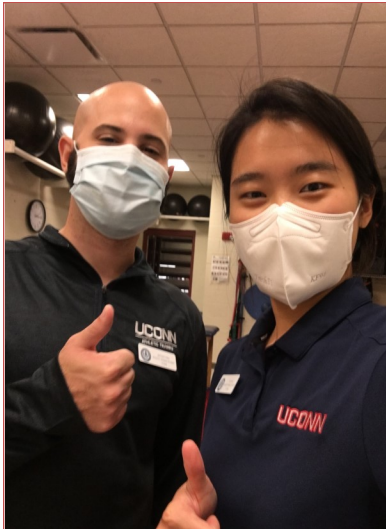


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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Officially an MSAT degree
- New Faculty on Board
- New Happenings in Kinesiology



First (Anthony F) and Second Year (Gyujin K) Students during their clinical rotation at Avon Old Farms School

## CLINICAL IMMERSION

Our second year MSAT students headed out all over the country to their clinical immersive experiences this past Fall and had such great experiences. These experiences allow the students to gain a real time full hands on experience without other classes or time constraints and get a great picture of the daily life of an athletic trainer.

We are fortunate to have a vast network of folks we work with and are able to tailor some of these experiences to engage students in what they want their future practice and career to focus on.

We had five second year students and all

have different aspirations for their careers. Although COVID put a wrench in many things, our students and assistant clinical coordinator, Michael DiStefano, were diligent and locked in wonderful experiences including:

- University of Georgia, Football
- University of Arizona
- Sacred Heart University
- Avon Old Farms School
- Manchester High School & Select Physical Therapy

Thank you to all the preceptors who gave our students invaluable experiences this fall.

*Thank you to all of our preceptors and clinical sites—our program excels because of all of your efforts and assistance with our students!*

### FUNDRAISER

Thank you to all who participated in our fundraiser this year. We were able to start an online store of UCONN athletic training clothing and other gear including backpacks, tumblers and more.

The proceeds from this fundraiser are helping students pay for their Board of Certification exams coming up this Spring.

We will be hosting more fundraisers in the coming years to help build a base for scholarship awards for incoming and present students.

If you have any other ideas or would like to be involved in our fundraising efforts, please [email](#) us!

## OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM: BE A WONDER FOUNDATION



The DiStefano family was rocked when two of their young sons were diagnosed with rare diseases (primary immunodeficiency, possible bone marrow failure syndrome). The journey towards rare disease identification and treatment is stressful and challenging. Finding answers for final diagnoses and treatments is ongoing and time-consuming. However, the DiStefanos do not want this struggle to be the only path on their rare disease journey. Providing support to others who may also be navigating rare diseases is a way to turn some of their challenges into something positive. By creating this foundation, the DiStefano family can work together on a common goal and create something helpful on a path that has felt so helpless.

"Be A Wonder" plays on the name of the book/movie, "Wonder". The word, wonder, is meant to encourage the idea that it is okay to be unique and to be rare. Rare diseases are truly wonders. Instead of simply being complications, and impacting life in negative ways, these wonders can have powerful positive effects. With support and advocacy, patients and families impacted by "wonder" diseases can have a profound impact on the future of medicine and offer support to other people with unique challenges. Rare diseases require a lot of "outside of the box" thinking and solutions. The initial pathways toward diagnosis and treatments are almost always not the final ones. Just like the journey to battle a rare disease, the Be A Wonder foundation will adapt to the changing needs of the rare disease community and progress of medicine.

The Be A Wonder Foundation's mission is targeted to help advance, achieve, and fund the needed support, research, and advocacy that is often overlooked. The collaborative and collective efforts of the foundation are inclusive of all rare diseases to support the rare disease community. "Be A Wonder" also advocates for everyone to register to be a bone marrow donor (BeTheMatch.org) and donate blood. For someone in need of a life-saving bone marrow transplant, it is truly unique and rare to be a match. The chance to save a life in a unique and rare way makes everyone who signs up a "wonder", and gives those needing a transplant hope that something "wonderful" could happen.

We encourage everyone to Join the Be The Match [Registry](#) or Text "BeAWonder" to 61474



The class of 2020 during one of their final classes in the Spring 2020 Semester

## CLASS OF 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

The class of 2020 had a whirlwind of an end of their final semester at UConn to say the least! In March COVID hit us all and campus shut down along with our clinical sites.

We are extremely proud of how they all handled themselves and transitioned seamlessly to the online platforms. To complete their clinical hours students participated in a mock telehealth clinic where they learned about telehealth policies and procedures and completed mock evaluations with many of our preceptors, alumni and friends! We ended the year with a virtual graduation party where faculty and preceptors attended for awards presentations and a video tribute to our senior class.

Through their four years at UConn students were able to highlight their favorite classes and other fond memories of the program.

Classes that topped the list as favorites included Dr. Douglas Casa's, emergency care class, clinical courses with Mike Distefano and Megan Barry, Assessment Lab with Catie Dann, and biomechanics with Lindsay Distefano.

Favorite clinical sites included, Loomis Chafee and St. Josephs along with UConn Women's soccer, women's ice hockey and men's ice hockey.

Top strengths identified by our graduating seniors included small class sizes, resources of a Division 1 school, networking opportunities and caring faculty and preceptors.

Plans after graduation included graduate school, graduate assistantships, PT school, PA school and many job placements. Great job!

Congratulations to our Class of 2020! #bleedblueforever

## 2020 AWARD RECIPIENTS

Robert Howard Clinical Award:	Harry Georges
Hans Hercule "MVP" Award:	Simone Huot
Wargo Academic Award:	Colbee Daigneault
Douglas J. Casa Research Award:	Kelly Coleman
Stephanie M. Singe Service Award:	Sarah Myers
On Campus Mansell Preceptor of the Year Award:	Patti Kula
Off Campus Mansell Preceptor of the Year Award:	EliaGaldamez-Tobias
Thomas Pike Alumni of the Year Award:	Rebecca Lopez

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT DR. ROBERT HUGGINS

**Current Job title:** Assistant Research Professor and President of Research and Athlete Performance and Safety at the Korey Stringer Institute

**How long have you been involved in the UConn ATP:** From 2010-2013 I guest lectured in the program and in 2013-2014 I taught 2 courses. In 2020 I now instruct the 2nd years culminating course and help them prepare for their cumulative practical.

**Favorite part of working in the UConn ATP:** My favorite part about working in the UCONN ATP is the students and the passion, drive, and thirst for learning that they bring to class each day.

**Favorite athletic training memory as a student:** My favorite memory was competing and winning in the New England American College of Sports Medicine College Bowl for the UCONN Department of Kinesiology and my fellow AT students.

**Briefly compare and contrast your experiences as a clinician and professor:** As a clinician I was an Athletic Trainer for NCAA Division I field hockey at the University of Virginia and then 2 years experience as athletic trainer for Sacred Heart University and 3 years with UCONN club sports. I also frequently work as an AT at the Falmouth Road Race, Boston Marathon, and Marine Corps Marathon treating exertional heatstroke victims. As a professor, I bring all of these experiences to my teaching and I am a huge proponent of problem based learning.

**Advice for prospective UConn athletic training students:** Trust your training, always seek to improve yourself, never stop learning and question everything.

**Favorite rehabilitation exercise and why:** Anything aquatic therapy

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT DR. NEAL GLAVIANO

**Current Job title:** Assistant Professor

### How long have you been involved in the UConn ATP:

Since 2020 as a faculty member, but I was an undergraduate student in the program from 2005-2007.

### Favorite part of working in the UConn ATP:

The opportunity to work alongside the faculty and clinical staff that were so instrumental in my education and help develop the next round of athletic trainers.

### Favorite athletic training memory as a student:

In my second semester as a student I provided care to an injured student trying out for one of the UConn teams. His father drove from out of state to pick up his son but took the time to stop by to the athletic training room to show his gratitude to the athletic training team. It demonstrated the value, importance and more importantly the necessity of the profession.

### Briefly compare and contrast your experiences as a clinician and professor:

My focus for both past and current experiences have always been to help people. In the clinical setting that was with immediate care and rehabilitation after injury, in the academic setting it is teaching the next generation of athletic trainers skills they can use to treat their own patients, and in the research setting it is trying to improve the outcomes of patients with chronic pain conditions.

### Advice for prospective UConn athletic training students:

Do not be afraid to try new things just because it might be difficult or it puts you outside your comfort zone.

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## IN THE CLASSROOM

Our faculty at UCONN are one of the strengths of our program as said by many students past and present.

Many of our faculty are leading experts in their fields of research and area able to bring that research excellence to the classroom. Additionally, we have staff Athletic Trainers who are able to bring their clinical expertise to our students as well as work with them in the clinical setting.

We are surrounded by adjunct instructors who bring so many different perspectives to the classroom and allows for students to see multiple lenses of the athletic training profession.

This Fall the second year UCONN AT students took KINS 5111-Practical Applications which was taught virtually until after the Thanksgiving break. During that time the students reviewed all concepts they have learned and built their own "class BOC study guide", and participated in 5 problem-based learning cases that challenged their ability to think critically, write

## OUR FACULTY

Many of our faculty have been at UCONN for many years and we thank them for their dedication to our program. We have some new faculty who are also alumni of the program, Dr. Neal Glaviano (Clinical Coordinator) and Dr. Eleni Diakogeorgiou (Program Director) have recently joined the UCONN AT Faculty team and are extremely excited to be back on campus!

### Program Faculty

Douglas J. Casa, PhD, ATC, FACSM, FNATA

Craig R. Denegar, PhD, PT, ATC, FNATA

Eleni Diakogeorgiou, PhD, MBA, ATC

Lindsay J. DiStefano, PhD, ATC, FNATA

Neal Glaviano, PhD, ATC

Stephanie M. Singe PhD, ATC, FNATA

### Adjunct Instructors

Megan Barry, MS, ATC

Deena Casiero, MD

Catie Dann, MS, ATC, CSCS

Michael Distefano, MA, ATC, PES, CES

Erica Filep, MSED, ATC

Robert Huggins, PhD, ATC

Kelsey Rynkiewicz, MS, MSHA, ATC, NREMT

Michael Szymanski, MS, ATC

Emma Zuk, MS, ATC

proper SOAP notes, and develop issues lists with management strategies using real-world cases.

After break, students participated in "boot camp" intensive 6-hour lab sessions over the course of 6 days that focused on every practical skill that is required of an entry level Athletic Trainer preparing them for their cumulative practical exam.

Students and faculty closely adhered to COVID-19 safety protocols and required testing. Everyone's dedication to the procedures provided our students hands on experience and practice.

On Friday December 11th the students completed their 2hr practical exams and performed extraordinary well. They should all be proud of their accomplishments. Next step.....the real deal! BOC Exam!



Second Year MSAT students (Shayna D, above & Jackie R, below) returned to campus to prepare for their cumulative exam with Dr. Robert Huggins



## NEW HAPPENINGS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY

### INSTITUTE FOR SPORTS MEDICINE

The UConn Department of Kinesiology and UConn Health are excited to launch the UConn Institute for Sports Medicine. Our mission is to enable athletes at all levels of play to reach their peak performance while preventing and treating sports-related injuries through world-class clinical care, education, and research.

This initiative brings together nationally recognized researchers, clinicians, and surgeons who are committed to the health, performance, and longevity of athletes. Headed by Co-Directors Laurie Devaney, PT, ATC, PhD and Matt Hall, MD, UConn ISM provides integrated sports medicine services from team based injury screening and prevention programs to surgery and return to sport rehabilitation for athletes of all ages and skill levels.

With cutting edge research resources, our clinician researchers conduct biomechanical and performance assessment to improve safety and performance on the field. The UConn Institute for Sports Medicine will be a force for athlete health and safety, sports medicine research, and sports medicine provider education in Connecticut and beyond. For more information follow us on Twitter @UConn\_ISM.

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*UConn's Department of Kinesiology was recently ranked #3 in the U.S. for doctoral programs in exercise science!*

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### FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Catie Dann, MS, ATC, CSCS

With change being the only norm these days, athletic training has not been the exception. Our AT staff have supplemented orthopedic evaluations, and taping with nasal swabs and personal protective equipment.

With sports trying to continue in the midst of a pandemic they have spent more time doing testing, and contact tracing to try and mitigate the spread within their own little walls.

Sports medicine now encompasses far more than what could have ever thought possible. Add on remote learning for small children at home and we have a collaboration of fantastic events really testing the limits.

Catie always looks to the positive and felt she got to learn about teaching in a completely different setting, online. Trying to teach effectively and not being able to use her hands as often as normal challenged her to articulate better.

As much as these times have been nowhere near optimal, there have been some silver linings in making us learn and grow.

#### Dr. Stephanie Singe

Dr. Singe has been very busy this past year AND had a baby! Congratulations Dr. Singe!

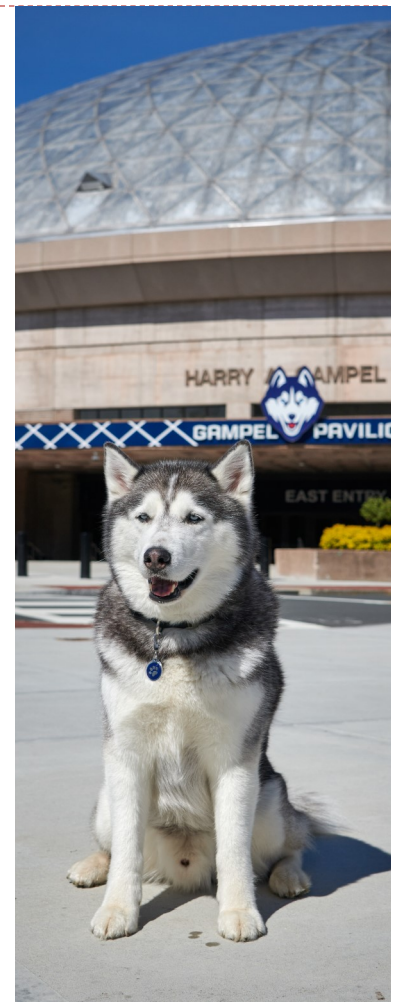
She has been facilitating and leading a special issues in the Journal of Athletic Training regarding Work-Life Balance (WLB) for the Athletic Trainer.

Over the last 2 months, she has given several talks on Work-Life Balance. The focus has been on being a self-advocate for fulfillment of WLB, and addressing ways parents can balance it all; and reduce their guilt.

During NATA member appreciation week, she also did a quick Q&A on the topic and just finished a PODCAST for the Journal of Athletic Training



*Staff ATs and Adjunct Instructors Megan Barry and Catie Dann bring their clinical expertise to the classroom.*



## ABOUT UCONN ATHLETIC TRAINING

The Professional Athletic Training Program (ATP) at the University of Connecticut is committed to providing students with a well-rounded educational experience. We are very proud of our program and it's continued growth. Additionally, we are in the process of developing an accelerated 3+2 program with Athletic Training. Students who choose this track can finish their Master's degree in 5 years vs the traditional 6 years.

We are housed in the Department of Kinesiology, within the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources, which offers students the chance to learn and interact with faculty in the areas of exercise science, athletic training, and physical therapy. Our faculty at UConn includes nationally renowned experts in exertional heat illnesses, hydration, sports nutrition, injury prevention/biomechanics, neuromuscular control, exercise physiology, physical therapy, and work/life balance.

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## OUR FRIENDS DOWN THE HALL

### KOREY STRINGER INSTITUTE

It has been quite the year for the Korey Stringer Institute (KSI)! Our program is so fortunate to have KSI so close and lucky to have Dr. Douglas Casa as part of our faculty team.

Doug and the team at KSI celebrated the 10 year anniversary on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Due to the pandemic, the annual gala has been postponed to May 2021. While COVID presented many challenges campus wide, KSI was able to resume lab research on July 6<sup>th</sup> and were very fortunate to safely complete 5 laboratory based studies.

In addition to the heat lab studies, the newest project, innovATE also began Fall 2020. The goal of innovATE is to increase athletic training services in secondary schools that are in traditionally underserved areas across the country. InnovATE will be able to assist 10-14 school districts in a collaborative project administered by KSI and is funded by the Education Fund established as part of the settlement of the NFL Concussion Litigation.

Team Up for Sports Safety (TUFSS) continues to engage with important stakeholders in secondary school athletics nationwide. The TUFSS project allows KSI to have on-site meetings with all 51 states (including D.C) in order to work to pro-actively enhance health and safety policies for high school sport. So far KSI has visited 13 states with another 8-10 to occur in the next seven months. For more information on KSI visit their [website!](#)

We are so grateful for the support from our corporate partners and private donors that make the work we do at KSI possible!

