



*Dr. Chuck Layne*

**G**reetings and welcome to the fall of 2007. I am writing to let you know of some of the exciting events and activities that have occurred in your department. As always, it was a very busy summer and this fall is no different.

This letter features stories on one of our new professors, Dr. Paula Rhode, who specializes in obesity-related issues, and also our esteemed

Dietetic Internship Program directed by Dr. Sharon Bode. You will learn about our UNDO research group headed by Dr. Rebecca Lee, which is dedicated to minimizing the incidence of obesity among minority populations. Our alumni spotlight features the very successful and proud alumnus Rómulo Crespo.

We have recently been informed by UH's central administration that your department has been awarded a new tenure track faculty position that we will use to hire a specialist in human space flight life sciences. This new faculty member will assist us in developing our new master's of science degree in Human Space Exploration Sciences. We are also developing a master's degree in human nutrition which we are very excited about. Stay tuned for more information about these exciting developments.

As always you can view the happenings in your department by checking the Current Events page on our website at <http://hhp.uh.edu/Currentevents/currentevents.cfm>.

If you or another HHP alumnus you know is doing something amazing, interesting or unique let us know; we're always looking for someone to feature in our *Alumni Spotlight*. Just e-mail me at [clayne2@uh.edu](mailto:clayne2@uh.edu). Have a safe, happy and healthy fall and we will touch base again this spring.

## FEATURED PROGRAM

**T**he University of Houston's **Dietetic Internship** program is a Commission on Accreditation of Dietetic Education (CADE) accredited post-baccalaureate, supervised practice program which qualifies graduates to take the examination to become Registered Dietitians. Interns enter the full-time program (40 hours/week for 28 weeks) in January or July of each year. The program goals reflect the major points of our philosophy: quality instruction and broad-based site training which enables graduates to land meaningful professional employment in a variety of areas upon completion. The internship is administratively housed within the College of Education, Department of Health and Human Performance.

The program has a general emphasis and is made up of a 2-week intensive orientation, followed by rotations of 10 weeks in clinical nutrition, 8 weeks in food service and management, and 8 weeks in community nutrition. Each emphasis area is divided into two 4-week rotations for management and community, or 5-week rotations in clinical nutrition. Interns are encouraged to be active participants in planning their educational program based on individual interests. These rotations, along with the assignments, projects, and weekly conferences with the internship director, allow interns to develop advanced knowledge and skills in the areas of nutrition assessment and hospital dietetics; food service management; dietary counseling in inpatient, outpatient, and public health environments; individual and group nutrition education; and numerous other skills related to nutrition and dietetics. Graduates of the program must meet 54 identifiable core competencies required by CADE. To see the complete list go to <http://grants.hhp.coe.uh.edu/internship/sites/corecompetencies.htm>.

The philosophy of the Dietetic Internship program at the University of Houston is to facilitate the transition of an intern from a student to an entry-level dietitian. Being accepted into our program helps ensure that the students obtain the breadth and depth of experiences needed to attain their professional goals.

We believe that education should be firmly anchored in strong ethics, an appreciation for different world cultures, and lifelong service to the community.

**For more information go to <http://grants.hhp.coe.uh.edu/internship/>.**



*Interns with director Dr. Sharon Bode*



*UTMB internship location*

**LABORATORY of  
INTEGRATED  
PHYSIOLOGY**

University of Houston  
College of Education

  
COLLABORATION  
FOR LEARNING & LEADING

Health & Human  
*Performance* 

<http://hhp.uh.edu>



*Dr. Paula Rhode*

An interview with Dr. Paula Rhode offers insight and a look to the future.

**Q.** Your curriculum vita shows that you had a strong interest in political science, history, and ethics. What made you decide to go into behavioral medicine?

**A.** I actually started out planning to attend law school. I graduated from my undergrad university and started

working for a large, corporate law firm, with the intention of working part-time and going to school part-time. In the course of working for that firm, I came to the conclusion that a law career was not a good match for me. I instead decided to go back to school and earn my degree in clinical psychology, with a subspecialty in BMed, because I was, and still am, interested in being part of a more public service-oriented profession.

**Q.** Mentoring seems to be an inherent part of who you are. What is your best experience [to date] as a mentor?

**A.** You are correct, I trained in a graduate program with a very strong mentor model, and consider mentoring to be an inherent part of how I teach, as well as a very enjoyable professional responsibility. My most enjoyable experience thus far has been mentoring my first doctoral student at my previous university, the University of Kansas. When my student proposed her doctoral dissertation, her performance was considered exemplary by the other faculty, and she subsequently was awarded one of only two university-wide doctoral dissertation fellowships as a result. I was thrilled that my student had worked so hard, performed so

well, and was recognized with such an accomplishment.

**Q.** You were a college athlete winning letters in basketball and softball, are you still involved in athletic pursuits?

**A.** Yes, but not to the same degree. I am no longer involved in team sports, and instead enjoying walking, biking, swimming and more individual forms of physical activity.

**Q.** Has your experience in team sports given you a different perspective regarding behavior modification?

**A.** I had not previously thought of it before, but yes, it probably does. As a former athlete, I likely have social and teaching skills that can be applied to both small groups and individuals, and can relate more easily to various populations. For example, even in cases when I have attempted to assist an individual in changing their behavior, volunteering that I previously played sports often “breaks the ice”, and relates a commonly shared experience. Interestingly, my college sports experience is the one item on my CV that is mentioned by others more consistently than any other, regardless of what context I am in.

**Q.** What would you like to do in the future?

**A.** In addition to continuing my research relating to how individual factors influence overweight, obesity and physical activity, I look forward to seeing our new PhD track on Obesity Studies get off the ground. To my knowledge, the program we are creating here is unique among doctoral programs throughout the country, and was one of the things that appealed most to me in relocating to the University of Houston. I think our new program has the potential to significantly impact the training of new scientists in this multidisciplinary field for years to come.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Rómulo (Rom) Crespo is one proud Cougar and dedicated alumnus. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade assistant principal at Morton Ranch High School in the Katy ISD is also the president of the alumni club “Katy Coogs.” Their objectives include local community service projects, actively recruiting UH students, and providing scholarship support to high school students, in the Katy and surrounding areas, that will attend UH.

Near fatal circumstances almost destroyed Rom’s plans to be a college graduate and serve his community as an educator. As a 17-year old freshman he was happy to be grown and starting college. He was also totally thrilled (as a walk-on) to have been invited to participate in spring off-season workouts with the Cougar Football team. Unfortunately, just 8 weeks into his first semester, he and a good friend were hit by an 18-wheeler as they were running across the street to catch a ride home. His friend Steven did not make it, and Rom was taken to the hospital comatose and broken. Suffering from severe brain trauma he remained in a coma for 2 weeks and stayed in the hospital for over 2 months. He was told that he may never walk right again (if at all) and that college was probably not an option. But just like the chance he took as a walk-on to play for the Cougar football team, all he needed was another chance to prove himself. He did not ask for it; he took it, worked for it, and made it! Rom received his B.S. in kinesiology in 1996, and his master’s in education in 2003.

Dr. Joel Bloom and Dr. Jan Wendt were his favorite HHP professors. He constantly uses the coaching principles he learned from Dr. Bloom because Coach Rom is everywhere.

He’s coached for schools and in the community in a variety of sports including football, soccer, basketball, wrestling and softball. He also coaches for teams his children play on at the YMCA and Katy Youth Sports clubs.



*Rómulo Crespo*

After teaching for a while, one of his principals told him he’d be a great administrator, which has proven to be true. Rom has an open-door policy for his students. He has encouraged several students to stay in school even though their personal circumstances were overwhelming. One student said, “Morton Ranch is the best school...the principals are always in the halls and at all the extracurricular events. It really makes them seem like they care.”

Mr. Crespo initiated the Latin Festival at Morton Ranch that showcases Hispanic cultures and the participating students are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Everyone loves it.

Becoming an educator led Rom to his wife Deysi. She was working as the registrar for John H. Reagan High School where he was hired as a teacher and coach. Now she’s at UH-Clear Lake finishing her degree in social work.

He had this to say about UH, “Our university is topnotch. Many Cougars are well known in their chosen fields for their intellect and talent. I know people who went to [supposedly] better schools and now have UH alumni as bosses. The thing I like most is that you get the same quality education as other universities, just locally; you get the education you need to get your career on track.”



*Dr. Rebecca Lee (center) and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee with the UNDO team*

The **Understanding Neighborhood Determinants of Obesity (UNDO)** Research Team conducts research anchored in an ecological framework that incorporates environmental and individual determinants of physical activity, dietary habits and obesity in populations of color. The work combines theory and techniques drawn from behavioral medicine, community psychology,

geography, policy science, social ecology and social marketing. **Dr. Rebecca Lee** is the Principal Investigator on several grants funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

These projects examine physical activity and dietary habits and their relation to the obesogenic capacity of neighborhoods in Houston and Austin, Texas.

The **Health Is Power (HIP)** project is a five year project funded by the National Cancer Institute to investigate how neighborhood of residence can help support lifestyle improvements. HIP has enrolled 100 Hispanic or Latina women in Austin and 260 African American and 45 Hispanic or Latina women in Houston, to complete a one year, group based program to increase walking for fitness or eating more fruits and vegetables. Women are measured before and after the HIP program to document their health improvements. After the women have completed the program, the HIP staff will



measure their neighborhoods to determine whether those women who live in more supportive neighborhoods are able to sustain their health improvements. So far, the HIP project has found that most of the participants are overweight at the beginning of the project, suggesting great need and interest from this vulnerable population. About 95% report that they are satisfied with the HIP project.

Plans are in the works to disseminate the HIP project on a broader scale via the internet.

The **Healthful Options Using Streets and Transportation in Our Neighborhoods (HOUSTON)** project is a three year project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Active Living Research Initiative to determine whether neighborhood factors are associated with health among public housing residents. Dr. Lee's UNDO team has partnered with residents in 12 housing developments. Residents complete brief physical assessments and a survey. Meanwhile, HOUSTON staff has made detailed measurements of all street segments and physical activity resources in the neighborhoods surrounding the housing developments. The individual measures will be correlated with the neighborhood measures to determine the relationship between these neighborhood factors and resident physical activity, dietary habits and obesity. Findings may provide evidence to help to improve physical activity and healthful food options in economically deprived neighborhoods.



To find out more about UNDO visit <http://hhp.uh.edu/undo>.

## QUICK HITS

### New Funding

- **Dr. Jenny Yi** for research project: Improving quality of life for low literate Asian American breast cancer survivors. Agency: Susan G. Komen for the Cure.
- **Dr. Max Kurz** for research project: Influence of center of gravity location on stability during extra vehicular activity. Agency: NASA-Johnson Space Center.
- **Dr. Paula Rhode, Dr. Rebecca Lee, Dr. Norma Olvera** and **Dr. Brian McFarlin** for Obesity Studies Doctoral Curriculum Development. Agency: UH Faculty Development Initiative Program.
- **Dr. Max Kurz** and **Dr. Brian McFarlin** for Virtual scientific presentations for HHP courses. Agency: UH Faculty Development Initiative Program.

### Alumni Achievements

- **Dr. Dale Pease** will be awarded the TAPERD Honor Award at the 2007 Annual convention in December.
- **Dr. Dan O'Connor** was hired as an assistant professor in our department. He received his doctorate in kinesiology, with a concentration in measurement, in December 2002.
- **Dr. Georgia Aljawadi Cruz**, M.Ed. in Health Education 2003, is now a first year medical resident at San Jacinto Family Medicine Center at San Jacinto Methodist Hospital in Baytown, TX.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH



*Melissa Scott-Pandorf with TV reporter*

Our faculty and students were featured several times in the English and Spanish-speaking media this year. Television stations, and local newspapers sought out our experts for interviews regarding health, science and research.

**Dr. Phyllis Gingiss** was featured on the Tobacco Control Network (TCN); in *The San Antonio Express News* and in *The Houston Chronicle*.

**Dr. Lisa Alastuey** appeared on KHOU Channel 11; **Dr. Demetrius Pearson** talked about Cowboys of Color and Black Rodeo on PBS/KERA-TV (Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX) and PBS/KUHT in Houston.

**Dr. Rebecca E. Lee** was interviewed by KHOU Channel 11 news, Fox 26's *HOLA Houston*, Univision's (TV Channel 45) *Nuestra Vida*, *The Houston Chronicle* and *The Daily Cougar*.

**Dr. Adam Thrasher's** research was the focus of a report on Channel 11 News and articles in *The Texas Medical Center News*, and *The Daily Cougar*. **Dr. Norma Olvera's** BOUNCE-Lite project was featured in *Muse News*, the newsletter of The Health Museum in Houston, and she has also been interviewed by TeleMundo and Univision. Fox News 26 interviewed adjunct faculty member **Caryn Honig**, an expert on eating disorders, for a segment on people with Type 1 diabetes who skipped their insulin intake in order to lose weight.

News about graduate student **Melissa Scott-Pandorf's** project to redesign the space suit for NASA appeared on several TV stations including CBS affiliate stations in Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX; Memphis, TN; Peoria, IN and Eugene, OR. The report was also featured on many online science portals.

Graduate student **Alexander Hutchison** was interviewed by Channel 11 News about how athletes can build up their resistance without tearing down their immune systems.



*cameraman for Channel 11 News*

*understanding, developing and promoting a healthy lifestyle*

Health & Human  
Performance 

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