Living the **Duke PA Mission**

Alumni focus clinical work on providing primary care in underserved communities
Alumni Profiles

Profiles of alumni representing each decade of the profession’s 50-plus year history

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Feature

Living the Duke PA Mission:
Meet four alumni who own, operate primary care practices in underserved areas of North Carolina

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Honoring the program’s mission

The 2018 issue of the Duke Physician Assistant Program Alumni Magazine focuses on the mission of the program and is a tribute to those alumni who are living out that mission through their clinical work. Tami Lee ('04), Elizabeth Buno ('04), Miquel Pinero ('04) and Enid Tallmer ('05) are featured in the cover story, where they provide their unique perspectives on how they came to own and manage their own medical practices working with underserved populations in North Carolina. In a time where PA-owned practices are the exception and not the rule, their stories and commitment to primary care are enlightening and inspirational.

Also, we get to know five outstanding alumni — Craig Bruno ('68), Lovest Alexander ('78), Wallace (Ed) Wilson ('88), Brian O'Donnell ('98) and Rhonda Torchio ('08) — through interviews conducted by current Duke PA second-year students. These alumni represent each decade of PA education at Duke, and they so honestly share their aspirations, goals and accomplishments as students and throughout their careers as PAs. I know their stories will resonate with many of you as you reflect on your time at Duke and in clinical work, also while providing a great opportunity for our current students to interact with and learn from alumni at different points in their careers.

Speaking of our current students, we also feature Class of 2018 president Emily Oslie and learn about her path toward becoming a PA and her career aspirations. And if you aren’t yet following our students on their new Instagram account, you’re really missing out! Follow their adventures in and outside the classroom and clinic at www.instagram.com/dukepastudents.

As always, the magazine includes extensive alumni updates and celebrations and remembrances of our classmates who have recently passed. Don’t miss the latest program and faculty news, including an update on the groundbreaking PA workforce research being conducted by the Duke PA Research Group, an update on our veterans outreach and mentoring initiative, and an exciting update on our entering class of students — one of the most diverse classes of students we’ve ever had at Duke PA.

Whether you are practicing in primary care, any one of many subspecialties, teaching our next generation of PAs, or innovators in research or industry, I say thank you for providing excellent care to patients and their families and for all you do each day to promote, support and honor our profession. Thank you for making the Duke PA program mission a reality.

Susan Blackwell, MHS, PA-C ('89)
Chair, Duke PA Alumni Steering Committee

Program Mission

The Duke Physician Assistant Program’s mission is to educate caring, competent primary care physician assistants who practice evidence-based medicine, are leaders in the profession, dedicated to their communities, culturally sensitive, and devoted to positive transformation of the health care system.
Leading *in a* time of transition

It's my honor to be writing this Director's Corner as the interim PA program director. In my 32 years at Duke, I've held many positions within the PA program and division. I was hired as evaluation and research coordinator in 1986, and within a couple of years became assistant director, then associate director. In 2003, I became program director, a position I held until late 2012. For the past five years, I've been the PA division chief — responsible for the PA program, our research group and alumni services. During the last many years, I've served on national and international boards of directors, chaired the PA accrediting body, and served on too many committees to remember or count. Duke is a wonderful place to grow your career, and I've had lots of support along the way.

And our program has grown and changed significantly, also — to now include 24 faculty, 16 staff and 178 students. This spring, we're continuing our critical look at the balance of our teaching methods, our technology, and the learning styles of our students. We're adapting and changing, always.

Moving back into the program director role, even temporarily, has humbled me by the responsibility to students and alumni that it embraces. As I shared with faculty and staff on my first day on the job, my goal as interim director has been the security and stability of our wonderful PA program. As we prepare to greet our next PA program director, let's continue to foster the recognition of the values that this program holds most dearly, while also welcoming the change that new leadership will bring.


"This spring, we're continuing our critical look at the balance of our teaching methods, our technology, and the learning styles of our students."
Welcome to the second edition of the Veterans Corner, a space in the annual alumni magazine dedicated to keeping our veteran alumni abreast of current events, future activities and updates. As mentioned in last year’s magazine, the Duke Physician Assistant Program is leading a $2.3 million institutional Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant, focused on primary care training and enhancement, and one of the four objectives is focused solely on veterans initiatives. We have been hard at work over the past year, with many more projects in the works for 2018, and I want to share just a few updates.

What we’ve done

Throughout 2017 we have gained a better understanding of barriers that prevent veterans from entering the PA profession and have put into place efforts to overcome those barriers. Our accomplishments include:

- Direct recruitment activities, including at Ft. Bragg and the Special Operations Medical Association annual conference
- Holding multiple Duke PA student meetings and support activities
- The creation of a veterans section on the Duke PA website (pa.duke.edu/veterans) to provide resources and information to prospective and current student veterans
- The creation of the N.C. Council on PA Veteran Initiatives, a coalition of PA programs from across North Carolina with the goal of establishing best practices for recruitment, overcoming barriers, and providing support to our student veterans

How you can help

One of our goals is to create a national veteran mentoring network in which veteran alumni will serve as mentors for prospective and current PA student veterans. We believe this will create stronger ties with our veteran alumni, while simultaneously better serving our current student veterans. Our vision is to link every incoming student veteran to veteran alumni, with the Duke PA program serving as a model for PA programs across the country. We are continuing to build our national network of mentors and need your help! If you are interested in participating in this important work, please e-mail me at michael.steigerwald@duke.edu.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Michael L. Steigerwald Jr., MHS, PA-C ('12)

Steigerwald is a former Army Combat Medic, having served in Baghdad, Iraq, from 2003 to 2005. He currently practices emergency medicine in Henderson, NC, serves as the assistant medical director for Warren County EMS and is the former assistant medical director for Vance County EMS.
Craig Bruno, PA-C (’68), was one of 15 in the second graduating class of physician assistants in the country. Currently working part-time at Greenville Healthcare Center in Greenville, N.C., he has been committed to the profession for over 50 years, primarily working in family practice. When he is not taking care of patients, he spends his free time enjoying all of the wonderful fishing North Carolina has to offer. Contact him at cbruno1@suddenlink.net.
Craig Bruno

Craig Bruno, PA-C (’68)
Practices at Greenville Healthcare Center, Greenville, N.C.

Like most PAs in the late-1960s, Craig Bruno was a Navy Corpsman prior to applying to PA school.

“When I got out of high school I thought I wanted to be a physical therapist, but decided to join the Navy and wanted to go to Corpsman’s school,” he says.

After returning from the Navy, Bruno went to Kingston School of Practical Nursing in Kingston, N.Y. While in school, he worked weekends as a technician at Stamford Hospital in Stamford, Conn. It was then that a physician encouraged him to look at the PA program at Duke. He remembers applying, and that “one thing led to another, and I came down to Tobacco Road from New York.”

Bruno expresses his appreciation for his education at Duke, not only for the mentors he had, but also for the innovation. The history, faculty and reputation are major reasons he believes a prospective student should seriously consider Duke for their PA education.

“[Duke] developed the mold for what a PA should be; first in the country,” he says.

Just as many current PA students might say, Bruno remembers “long days and long hospital rounds” when he was at Duke. He also fondly remembers his rotations outside of Durham, N.C. — especially his primary care rotation in Plymouth, N.C. He says no one had left the safe confines of the Duke system as a PA at the time, but he saw the immense need in Plymouth.

“It was interesting how Plymouth presented the town to Duke as a patient that they could not take care of; they needed help,” he says.

He began working there after graduation and stayed for 17 years. From the start, he dedicated himself to the Duke PA program’s mission of leading others by example to practice evidence-based medicine in one of North Carolina’s rural communities.

While Bruno’s dedication to the program’s mission has remained constant, his contributions to the profession have changed. In 1986, he and another Duke PA alumnus, Stephen Joyner, PA-C (’68), co-founded Greenville Healthcare Center in Greenville, N.C. Bruno became an employer as well as a provider, extending the parameters of what he could do — one of the things he enjoys about being a PA.

“It is so diversified; you can specialize, get into your own business, or research with universities,” he says.

When it comes to what he appreciates the most about being a PA — specifically in family practice — Bruno says it is getting to take care of generations of families, all while still taking the occasional house call. As he remembers discussing with a colleague, “being in family practice is not only about practicing medicine, it is a way of life.”

Interviewed by Monica Favilla, PA-S
Second-year Duke PA student
Lovest T. Alexander, Jr., MHS, PA-C, (’78), is the director of diversity and inclusion for the Duke Physician Assistant Program and recipient of the 2016 Duke University Blue Ribbon Award for Diversity. He is an assistant professor of community and family medicine at Duke, and enjoys facilitating small group learning activities that were a pivotal facet of his own training. Contact him at lovest.alexander@duke.edu.
“You never know which way life will go. Things happen. You make the best of it, and it might just be the best opportunity of your life and career.”

These practical, yet profound words cradle the experiences that led Lovest T. Alexander, Jr., to pursue his career as a physician assistant and have guided his practice since graduation.

Alexander was born in Warren County, N.C., where the economic void left by the decline of the tobacco industry was never filled. In light of his impending draft during the Vietnam War, Alexander enlisted in the U.S. Air Force following his graduation from North Carolina Central University, where he completed pre-med studies as an undergraduate. This curveball spurred his first clinical experiences as a laboratory specialist and medical aerospace research assistant, which bolstered his application to the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine. He was accepted following the completion of his service commitment, although family obligations resulted in his departure after two years of study. While the unexpected changes in his life left him searching for the next step, his mother nudged him toward the Duke Physician Assistant Program, into which he matriculated in 1976. In retrospect, he is especially grateful that his training allowed him to raise his son and expedite his path to practicing primary care.

Alexander smiles as he remembers studying with friends Lloyd and Ed — the three collectively known as “The Three Musketeers” — in the Seeley Mudd Library and decompressing on Ninth Street after long weeks during didactic year. He says that the 40-person class size catalyzed the development of friendships that have lasted the 40 years since embarking on separate professional journeys.

In his years as a practicing PA, Alexander has served a variety of the Triangle’s residents, including Duke students, public housing residents at Lincoln Community Health Center in Durham, N.C., and those incarcerated at Central Prison in Raleigh, N.C. He practiced internal medicine at Duke University Medical Center and instructed medical students and resident physicians, and joined the faculty of the Duke PA program in 1986. In addition to coordinating North Carolina recruitment efforts for the program, Alexander, the only black student in his program class, has established recruitment activities with a number of historically black colleges and universities such as Spellman and Morehouse.

He says that the Duke name is often intimidating to prospective students, particularly minority students. To ease these qualms, he points to the program’s holistic approach to candidate selection, which he states heavily considers life experience and dedication to serving the community, as opposed to a sole focus on academic performance.

Albeit more winding than linear, Alexander affirms that given the option, he would again choose the path that led to ultimately becoming a PA. “I’m humbled to have had the opportunity to help educate future providers. Over the years, hopefully I have made a difference in the lives of many students and patients that I have come in contact with.”
Wallace (Ed) Wilson, MHS, PA-C (‘88), has had an extensive career practicing in a variety of fields including pediatrics, orthopedics and family medicine. He currently works in pediatric orthopedics with Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta where his focus includes musculoskeletal injuries, sports medicine and gait abnormalities. Wilson is a retired officer from the United States Coast Guard, and during his service career completed a number of programs including Medical Technology, Survival School, and Environmental Health and Safety School. He graduated from George Washington University, Iona College and Duke University while in the Coast Guard. Wilson has been a lifelong advocate for the profession and thanks his wife, family, friends, the U.S. Coast Guard and Duke University for his career and success. Contact him at ed4duke@comcast.net.
Wallace (Ed) Wilson, MHS, PA-C ('88)
Practices at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, Atlanta, Ga.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work as a PA?
For me, besides working as part of a great team to deliver the best medical care possible, the people and other professionals you meet along the way and how we impact others’ lives together as PAs is so important. I have had the privilege and reward of caring for sick and injured children. I have two children and three grandchildren of my own, but there is something special about caring for someone’s child and getting a big hug or smile in return. You have patients who come back to see you over and over again because their parents trust you and understand that you will care for their child as if they were part of your own family. After taking care of children for years, you receive invitations to attend plays, sporting events, high school graduations, wedding receptions and even baby showers. That’s pretty special.

How have you carried the Duke PA program’s mission with you through your life and career?
My classmates and I have all applied what we learned at Duke toward helping our communities to the very best of our ability. This includes keeping up with new medications, learning about new treatment plans, and constantly exchanging this information with colleagues. In addition, it means a lot to me to volunteer as much as I can. From speaking at career days to teaching casting workshops, I am always proud to share about our profession with students from local high schools, universities and other health care programs, and talk about the Duke family and what it means to be a PA.

If you could tell prospective students one thing about why they should attend Duke for PA school, what would it be?
If you have the opportunity to attend the Duke PA program, you will always be part of the family. Duke has been an important part of my life ever since my first day at the PA program. I can remember applying to the school and speaking to faculty members such as Reginald D. Carter, Ph.D., PA-C (’78), and felt as if they truly had an interest in who I was as a person. Instead of focusing only on my educational background and experience, the Duke PA program invested in getting to know about my family, children and my life goals. Even now as an alumnus, there is always something special about working with Duke-trained PAs, surgeons and residents. Nothing compares to the Duke camaraderie and family. You can attend any PA program, receive a great education and become part of the PA nation, but when someone asks which PA program you graduated from, and you tell them Duke, you will understand what it means.

Interviewed by Cristina Pruett, M.S., PA-S
Second-year Duke PA student
Brian O’Donnell, MHS, PA-C (’98), is a provider on the virtual medicine team for a national technology-oriented primary care practice. O’Donnell began with the company in 2013 while living in Paris, covering the night shift in the United States. The virtual medical team supports the in-office primary care practice by being available day or night via email, video or phone calls, or through apps. O’Donnell also works in some of the in-person offices when in the U.S. He feels very lucky because he enjoyed living in France and never dreamed he’d be able to work as a PA for a U.S. practice while living abroad. Contact him at bdodonnell1@gmail.com.
Why did you become a PA?
I thought I was going to become a veterinarian, beginning the pre-med and pre-vet track in college, but quickly was sucked into a business program. After graduation, I did an internship and started a career in retail, but it was just number crunching and wasn’t right for me, so I started to think about medicine and vet school again. While visiting a friend who was finishing residency, I read an article about various health care professions. One mentioned was a physician assistant and I was intrigued. It really appealed to me because I would be able to start working in two years and do essentially what I would do as a physician. I asked my friend about PAs and he told me that it would be a great career. I soon started taking classes through the Harvard extension school to complete my prerequisites, began working as a medical assistant, and the rest is history.

What were your career goals and aspirations when you graduated?
I knew I wanted to do primary care and have patients of all ages. I also knew that I wanted to have some specialty experience up my sleeve. I’m very visual and someone who sees all of the details, so dermatology was a natural consideration. I did two months of dermatology at Duke, and that — coupled with primary care — has been a bonus for me and my patients.

How have you carried the Duke PA program’s mission with you through your life and career?
The evolution of my career took me from a poor, rural and underserved community that was primarily white, to a community health center that served primarily Latinos. Following that, I had a large patient base of gay men because of my focus on HIV, then I took it a step further to go to rural communities in Africa to teach clinicians there how to better manage their patients with HIV. I worked in a Harvard-based facility for many years and was chosen to attend their academy for future leaders — as a PA in a primarily M.D.-dominated program. I now practice primary care in a virtual medicine capacity along with other PAs who are bringing this approach to care into fruition at a high level. I hope that what we do in our company will elevate the level of care in primary care, not just in the United States, but around the world.

If you could tell prospective students one thing about why they should attend Duke for PA school, what would it be?
Duke is the founding institution for the PA profession; they have been in it longer than anyone, really refining their approach to education. Duke knows how to help its students maximize their opportunities to position them to be successful. People want to go to the place where it all began and be part of the community that created this incredible profession and improved access to health care for so many people.
Rhonda Torchio, MHS, PA-C (’08), has worked at ABC Pediatrics of Harnett County in Dunn, N.C., since graduating from the Duke Physician Assistant Program in 2008. She says her most important roles are being a wife to her husband of 10 years and mom to her two children — Philip, 4, and Adriana, 18 months. Contact her at rhondamid01@hotmail.com.
Rhonda Torchio, MHS, PA-C ('08)
Practices at ABC Pediatrics of Harnett County, Dunn, N.C.

Why did you become a PA?
While in high school, I shadowed a Duke PA alumna Gloria Jordan, MHS, PA-C ('88), and noted the compassion and caring nature she provided her patients, along with a special bond that positively impacted their health. I thought to myself, if I could do this each day, what a difference I would feel I was making in the health and lives of others. Today, Gloria is my co-worker and still serves as an excellent example to the PA profession.

What were your career goals and aspirations when you graduated?
When I graduated, I initially had planned to practice family medicine to keep my skills broad rather than specialized. Along with that, my personal goal was to make a difference in each of my patient’s lives and build a relationship with them. Upon interviewing for my current position, my boss asked about my interest in pediatrics versus family medicine and said that pediatrics would keep my practicing skills very broad, also, and I have found that to be true — I see ages newborn to 22 and multiple diagnoses from jaundice to diabetes.

How have your goals and plans changed through the years?
As I have matured in this profession, my daily goals have changed. Each day, I try to take the holistic approach. I am there to physically treat [my patients], but also want to learn from them personally and emotionally, as all of these together make the person well. If I can improve at least one aspect of their health, I feel I am making a difference.

What do you enjoy most about being a PA?
I enjoy the personal relationships I have with my patients. In working at the same pediatrics practice for almost 10 years, I know my patients and their families very well. I have even had the pleasure of treating my older patients’ children. This continues to allow me to feel like I am making a difference not only in individuals’ lives, but also in families.

If you could tell prospective students one thing about why they should attend Duke for PA school, what would it be?
When I attended Duke, I felt like I was getting the best education I could receive. It was not until I graduated that I realized how well Duke had prepared me. Each day, I continue to practice skills that were taught to me at Duke that allow me to excel in my profession.

How have you carried the Duke PA program’s mission with you through your life and career?
I work in a rural health clinic where I provide health care to different populations each day. We have a holistic approach to pediatrics in our clinic, not only providing physical well-being care by PAs, NPs and pediatricians, but also mental health care by counselors and a psychiatrist. This approach allows me to address multiple disciplines with the main goal of education to help lead to a healthier population.

I want not only to educate my patients, but also others in this profession. I am a preceptor for Duke and Campbell University PA students, and for the past three years have served as guest professor at Campbell’s Physician Assistant Program, speaking on multiple pediatric topics. Performing these services allows me to pass on the legacy that Duke and the PA profession has provided for me.
Emily Oslie hopes to begin her career in a relatively broad setting, such as internal medicine, and potentially focus on a specialty, such as orthopedics or emergency medicine, in the future. One of her interests is the role of technology and how it has advanced medical practices. She would like to someday play a role in shaping future developments in order to improve patient outcomes and provider experiences. Her background in coaching also makes her excited for the possibility of precepting or teaching someday. Contact her at emily.oslie@duke.edu.
Emily Oslie

Emily Oslie, PA-S
Stead Society President, Class of 2018

Why did you want to become a PA?
I grew up playing volleyball competitively, which ultimately resulted in a number of injuries. PAs were always an important part of the medical team that provided excellent care and got me back on the court. It was my pre-existing interest in medicine, combined with such positive exposure to the profession, that drove my higher education aspirations. I was also drawn to the lateral mobility that PAs have, which is important for me as someone who has ever-evolving interests.

How has the program’s mission shaped your plans and goals?
I’ve appreciated the training and education that we receive in the areas of cultural competency, health care disparities and bias in medicine. I feel empowered to address these issues as a PA and make a meaningful impact in whichever medical setting I practice.

What will you remember most about your time as a student in the Duke Physician Assistant Program?
I will always remember the relationships that I’ve built with other students. The rigors of this program were made far more manageable with a group of new friends who were experiencing the exact same challenges. As a West Coast native, it has been so much fun to explore an entirely new region with people who care about each other and who share passions in similar areas.

What observations do you have about the PA profession, its place in health care and its future?
One of the reasons I chose this profession was the high demand for PAs which is something that I do not see changing anytime soon. During clinical rotations it has become increasingly clear that PAs are integral to the functionality of the medical system, and I think that their role will only continue to expand in order to facilitate excellent patient care while working side-by-side with a team of professionals.

If you could tell prospective students one thing about why they should attend Duke for PA school, what would it be?
As daunting as it is, the didactic year of the Duke Physician Assistant Program has prepared us all to excel in clinical rotations. I feel confident in my medical decision-making and procedural skills as a student because of the comprehensive training we received during our first year. I am also thankful that I chose Duke because my clinical year was spent learning from world-renowned experts in their field, which is unique to this program and its medical center.
Mission of the Duke Physician Assistant Program

To educate caring, competent primary care physician assistants who practice evidence-based medicine, are leaders in the profession, dedicated to their communities, culturally sensitive, and devoted to positive transformation of the health care system.

Living the Duke PA Mission

By Leah Komada

Since the physician assistant profession’s founding at Duke University in 1965, the scope of PAs’ work has grown steadily, along with an increased need for health care services in the United States. A March 2017 Association of American Medical Colleges report shows the demand for physicians will grow faster than the supply through 2025, and physician assistants are needed to fill the gap.

PAs are especially important in underserved communities. According to the National Rural Health Association, about 20 percent of Americans live in rural areas, but only 9 percent of physicians practice there. However, 17 percent of PAs practice in these areas.

“The role of physician assistants is really critical,” says Benjamin Money, Jr., MPH, president and CEO, North Carolina Community Health Center Association. “They’re critical to health centers actually being a medical home that’s readily accessible to the community. We’re proud of the fact that Duke University is the home of the PA program and we are grateful for their support of the training and encouragement of PAs to continue their careers in underserved areas within the state of North Carolina.”

While the number of projected PA jobs and practicing PAs is increasing nationwide, it is a rarity for physician assistants to own and operate their own practices; some states won’t even allow PAs to have proprietorship over a practice.

However, these Duke Physician Assistant Program alumni have worked to establish themselves as primary care providers as well as leaders in business, owning and operating flourishing clinics in underserved communities of North Carolina.

Elizabeth Buno, Roxboro Family Medicine

Elizabeth Buno, MHS, PA-C, was a medical social worker with plans to work in a big trauma center, as an emergency room PA, when she began Duke’s program in 2002. She worked with Duke Cardiology after graduating in 2004 but soon found herself following her heart into primary care.

“I realized that I didn’t get to follow up with my patients,” she says. “I didn’t realize how much that would mean to me. I never had my own panel of patients and I found that frustrating.”

She joined Roxboro Family Medicine, a clinic that cares for patients in a medically underserved community, in 2005. Three months later, she was told the practicing physicians were leaving and that she had three options: help find another physician to take over, get out of her contract, or figure out a way to buy the practice herself.

Leah Komada is a freelancer writer based in Charlotte, N.C.
“I was nine months out of PA school at that point and I really loved and had a strong connection with the patients I was seeing,” she says. “I realized what an underserved community it was and the last thing I wanted to do was leave. So I just thought, ‘Why not? Let’s do this. Let’s see if I can own a practice.’"

Buno became part-owner in 2006 and in 2010 became the majority owner. Tami Lee, MHS, PA-C, came on a short time later as her partner in the business.

“I had never even contemplated owning my own practice,” Buno says. “When I was in school, it was, and still is, very rare and, I think as of about three years ago, less than one percent of PAs were in ownership of their practice. Coming out of school, if I was really not prepared clinically, there is no way I could have handled it.”

Her practice has earned certification as a Patient-Centered Medical Home, which indicates that the practice and its providers meet high requirements and standards as they deliver all-encompassing care to patients and families.

**Tami Lee,** **Roxboro Family Medicine**

A graduate of Duke’s PA program in 2004, Tami Lee, MHS, PA-C, knew primary care was for her.

“Terrific professors, instructors and mentors all contributed to my journey and influenced the fact that I wanted to go into primary care in a rural area,” she says. “I did many of my rotations in rural communities and fell in love with the patient population in those small, rural settings.”

For several years after graduating, Lee worked in Roxboro. Eventually she and Buno discussed merging their clinics. The two decided to join together in 2010 at Roxboro Family Medicine.

“We have similar hearts for what we’re trying to do in Roxboro and the services we’re trying to bring there,” Lee says. “I think the wide spectrum of what we see and treat every day, cradle to grave, and getting to know generations of people—treating sometimes four generations in the same family—that makes us better.”

Lee says the practice works with the loan repayment program through the North Carolina Medical Society to bring providers to Roxboro Family Medicine to help with services.

“The problem is many providers will stay in the county for five years and, once that loan repayment is done, they’ll move on,” she says. “We’ve seen that time and time again with some of the other clinics and...”
Miguel Pineiro, FamHealth

Miguel Pineiro, MHS, PA-C, was 35 years old when he enrolled in PA school at Duke. After he graduated in 2004, he worked in mental health as a Spanish-speaking PA for a Latino doctor in Raleigh and as a full-time PA in the emergency room.

Three years ago, Pineiro got a call that the Latino doctor he worked for had passed away and that her clinic was in need of a full-time provider. He sent a message on Facebook to his now-colleague, Enid Tallmer, asking if she’d be interested in buying the practice with him.

The two opened FamHealth, a bilingual primary care clinic that focuses on serving the Latino population in Raleigh, in September 2016.

“Our clinic is low cost,” Pineiro says. “We want to provide care, not only to the Latino community, but to people who don’t have insurance. We do everything possible to be a resource for the community.”

FamHealth is a part of Project Access of Wake County, a program that coordinates and connects patients needing specialty care with specialists that provide those services for free. The program has yearly pledges from physicians and clinical staff to provide care to patients that are referred due to medical necessity.

specialists. I think people have to be passionate about the people there to stay.”

Lee says her motivation stems from her desire to provide services for patients who might not otherwise have them and to ensure patients know they can come to their clinic rather than going to an urgent care or to the emergency room.

“We know our patients, their home circumstances, their extended circumstances,” she says. “We try very hard as a Patient-Centered Medical Home to make sure if someone walks in off the street that they see their normal provider to the extent possible. Having that knowledge of someone’s whole history, which might be subtle nuances that another provider might not know in a five-minute skim of their chart, goes a long way in making sure we provide the best care possible for our patients.”
“Enid and I are older, so we have seen what’s important in life,” Pineiro says. “When you leave this earth, you have to be able to ask how you helped your fellow man. Were you able to help somebody in a meaningful capacity? That’s what drives our business. We want to affect positive change in the population that we serve. We’re not trying to get rich; we’re here to be of service.”

Pineiro says he believes the trend of PAs opening their own practice will continue to grow because the need is there.

“Most doctors go to specialty care and leave this huge vacuum of primary care,” he says. “People are getting older because medicine is fortunately making people live longer. That means people live longer with more medical problems and you need to have somebody in the middle to coordinate whatever advanced care people need.”

He also credits Buno, Lee and Roxboro Family Medicine with being the future of what a sustainable primary care clinic should be and how other clinics should strive to operate.

“Our practice is a perfect example of something that’s worked for 10 years now,” he says. “It’s a model for where most of us in primary care would like to end; a place where you can come in and get all your health care needs taken care of at one place, or at least figure out where you need to go if you need to go elsewhere.”

Enid Tallmer, FamHealth

A 2005 Duke PA program graduate, Enid Tallmer, MSW, MHS, PA-C, found her favorite rotations during PA school to be in primary care, working with underserved communities. She feels it’s where she belongs.

“I was born in Puerto Rico and I’ve always been very aware of what not belonging feels like,” she says. “My parents didn’t have any money. My mother would go to the doctor and they’d always have to find an interpreter and never understood what she was saying. That led me to want to be in health care.”

Tallmer first began her career working in mental health and was the first bilingual clinical social worker in Wake County.

“As I started working with Latinos and realizing again that the mind, soul and body are so interlinked, I became more aware of the physical health part and was very interested in looking at labs and knowing what they meant,” she says.

At 40 years old, Tallmer enrolled in Duke’s PA program and, after completion of the program, initially worked in urgent care.

“I was never satisfied,” she says. “In urgent care, you have no continuity. Patients would ask me if I had my own practice and if they could come see me and I’d have to say, ‘No, I’m so sorry.’”

She says when Pineiro asked her to join FamHealth as his partner that was the sign she needed to make the switch.

“It was an incredible risk, and still is,” she says. “But whenever I have doubts about doing what I do, I see a patient or two come in and they’re so grateful and are so glad I’m there. They hug me and send me a zillion blessings. When they do that, that’s when I say, ‘This is where I belong.’”
1960s

Ken Ferrell (’67) spent PA Day 2017 as a guest of the White House Medical Unit and the Navy Association of Physician Assistants (NAPA). He received a plaque of appreciation and a coin commissioned by NAPA celebrating the PA profession’s 50th anniversary. Ferrell also had the privilege of being the keynote speaker at several white coat ceremonies during the past year.

Paul Moson (’68) and his wife, Anne-Lise, continue to reside in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. Moson keeps busy with his recruiting business, Primus Search (www.primussearch.com), and is on the advisory committee of the University of New England PA Program.

Bill Stanhope (’69) moved from Saint Louis to Atlanta in 2009 and continued his career as an adjunct professor in the distance learning program at the Saint Louis University School of Public Health’s Institute for Bio-security. After retiring in 2013, he began volunteering at the Martin Luther King National Historic Site as a docent for both the Trails and Rails program and the park itself. Stanhope has since returned to teaching two to three courses per year at the adult universities at Mercer and Emory. He travels with his wife, Dana, who is a consultant to the clinical associate (PA) movement in South Africa, and enjoys spending time with the clinical associate students and graduates.

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1970s

Mike Quirk (’70) has been married for 50 years and has two children; his son is a PA in Arizona and his daughter is a business owner. Quirk has been living in Cudjoe Key, Fla., for the past 20 years. He is now working one-half day per week and is a member of AAPA and FAPA.

Charles C. Lewis (’71) announces the birth of his great-grandson, Lucas Alexander Watford, on July 4, 2017. His retirement as assistant professor at Nova Southeastern University was effective Dec. 31, 2017.

Richard Turner (’72) retired after 40 years as a PA. He currently lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, with his wife, Joyce. He volunteers with the American Red Cross Medical Assistance Team, which he helped establish.

Chuck Shimer (’73) retired eight years ago and moved to his mountain home near Asheville, N.C. In June 2017, he underwent quadruple bypass surgery but has recovered well. He plans to move back to the St. Petersburg/Clearwater, Fla., area to be closer to family.

John McEligott, M.D. (’74) continues to work clinically, and has six children and six grandchildren. He is medical director for Dr. John’s Medical Solutions (www.docjmd.com). He remains a big fan of the PA profession and supports any and all requests for better laws and education opportunities. McEligott employs three PAs and plans to add more.


Bill Vaassen (’74) retired from clinical practice on Aug. 29, 2017. He recently welcomed his first grandchild, Madison.

James Trenner (’75) is now fully retired after 36 years of full-time, and six years of part-time, clinical practice.

Glenn A. Withrow, M.D. (’75) worked in Southport, N.C., until 1978 and then moved to Raleigh, N.C., where he worked at Dorothea Dix Hospital in the medical division. He went to medical school at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1980 and finished a family medicine residency in 1985. He opened his own practice, The Family Doctor, in 1985 and sold it in 2015. He is semiretired and continues solo practice in behavioral medicine in Chapel Hill, N.C. He also works part-time with National Geographic on expeditions to Baja, Calif., and Antarctica.

Carl Cuvo (’76) announced that, after 40 years of active practice in the Lehigh Valley and Pocono regions of Pennsylvania working as an orthopedic PA, he retired from full-time practice in May 2016. He was the first formally trained PA in the region when he graduated from Duke and has worked both in the private sector and as an employee of a hospital. Cuvo and his wife have been married for 30 years.

Ronald Grimm (’76) retired in August 2015 from being a hospitalist, primarily working inpatient hematology-oncology. He volunteers at a free clinic and continues to give lectures at a local PA program.

Paul Hendrix (’78) was a charter member of the North Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants (NCPA) and served continuously on the NCPA Board of Directors from 1982 to 2017. In December 2017, Hendrix’ peers on the board honored him by naming the conference room at the Eugene A. Stead, Jr., Center for Physician Assistants in Durham, N.C., after him — the Paul C. Hendrix, MHS, PA-C Conference Room.

Reginald Carter (’78) spent PA Day 2017 as a guest of the White House Medical Unit and the Navy Association of Physician Assistants (NAPA). He received a plaque of appreciation and a coin commissioned by NAPA celebrating the PA profession’s 50th anniversary.

Kenda Singer (’78) worked in family practice, women’s care and dermatology for 35 years after completing the Duke PA program. She is now retired, married and has three grandchildren.
Debra Teplin (’78) continues to work clinically and has spent most of her career as a PA working in women’s reproductive health with forays into urgent care, emergency medicine, oncology and chronic care. She is currently trained to be a sexual assault forensic examiner, and recently began conducting exams for asylum seekers after having completed training through Physicians for Human Rights. Teplin now lives in New York City.

Richard (Rick) Green (’79) retired in January 2017 from distributing spine implants and orthopedic total joint implants in the Asheville N.C., area.

Kathy Batts (’80) continues to work as a PA in general surgery part-time in Kirkland, Wash. She is a certified hypnotherapist and is currently working toward her advanced practice hypnotherapist certification. She teaches classes in life coaching, specializing in health coaching using mindfulness techniques, and is completing the certification process.

Perry Cook, M.D. (PA ’82, M.D. ’94) went on to medical school at Duke, then completed a radiology residency at Stanford University. From there she moved to Wyoming where she has been practicing for the past 25 years. She lives on a ranch at the base of the Wind River Mountains. She has two grown children and many animals.

Jeanne Lenzer (’80) has worked as an independent medical investigative journalist and frequent contributor to The BMJ for nearly 15 years. She recently published her first book, “The Danger Within Us: America’s Untested, Unregulated Medical Device Industry and One Man’s Battle to Survive It.” Reviews of the book and resources for medical journalists can be found at www.jeannelenzer.com.

Doug Hammerstrom, M.D. (’81) lives in Spokane, Wash., and works as a family medicine physician training new nurse practitioners at Providence Health. He moved to Spokane recently after living in Colorado Springs, Colo., for 17 years practicing family and emergency medicine.

William Schultz (’81) and his wife, Ann, moved to Memphis, Tenn., after he retired from Duke Pediatric Hematology-Oncology in 2004. He worked with a sickle cell stroke prevention trial at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and now works with Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center as a remote medical monitor on clinical trials in the Caribbean. He retired from full-time research work two years ago on his 70th birthday. His and Ann’s garden was named the best in Memphis in 2012 and was one of three gardens on the Mid-south Hydrangea Society Garden tour in 2016.

Dan Vetrosky (’81) has taught at the University of South Alabama for 20 years, retiring as an associate professor in 2015. He earned his doctorate in instructional design and development in 2008. He has continued to teach on a part-time basis and works in a urology clinic one-to-two days a week.

Jon Gootnick (’82) spent a week in spring 2017 caring for patients in Jacmel, Haiti, after the devastation of Hurricane Matthew, working with a surgical team from The Community Coalition of Haiti.

Jay Blacksher (’83) owns and operates an emergency medicine practice in Gooding, Idaho. He is married and has one daughter who is an occupational therapist.
Dan Castenson (’84) works for Peace Health Medical Group in Longview, Wash., and enjoys his job staffing a same-day appointment clinic for the past 11 years. He looks forward to retirement in five years and has a grown son and daughter.

Gerry Forest (’85) has been working with Medtronic for the past 19 years and was recently promoted to U.S. Senior Strategic Accounts Manager for Congenital Therapies. He was named a distinguished fellow of the AAPA in 2012. Forest is married with five kids and lives in Whispering Pines, N.C.

Anne (Clemens) Holway (’85) has been out of clinical practice for several years, working as a consultant for the management of technical medical writing, currently serving as the director of medical writing for a small biopharmaceutical company. Holway also serves as a consultant, producing safety narratives for regulatory authorities. Durham, N.C., is still home, but she divides time between there and a second home outside of Pinehurst, N.C. She and her husband, Matt, welcomed their seventh grandchild in October.

Elizabeth Sheehan (’85) continues to expand the model she developed to bring sustainable, high quality primary health care to Haiti. Since its inception in 2008, Care 2 Communities (C2C) (www.care2communities.org) has treated more than 100,000 patients from three clinic sites. Sheehan joined the board of Women Moving Millions (www.womenmovingmillions.org) in 2015, and works with a team and board to move resources to support the causes of women and girls. To date, 290 women in the network have gained $700M in
grants. She is a founding member of the Summit Group (www.summit.co) and serves as an adviser to the Summit Institute on global health issues.

Frank Stamper ('85) retired in January 2018.

Edwin Cowey ('86) retired from his orthopedic PA career in December 2017 and is now a volunteer ski patroller at Sugarbush Resort in Vermont. His wife, Jane Jevons ('86), continues to work part-time as a dermatology PA in South Burlington, Vt. Their eldest son, Sam, lives and works in nearby Burlington and their youngest son, Chris, will graduate from college this spring.

Catherine LeBlanc ('86) is still recovering from post-concussion injuries sustained in a high-speed crash. She wishes her classmates well.

Craig Robinson ('86) continues to work in an emergency department in Denver, Colo., and is a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves, with a 4th deployment pending. His family is well and he is happily married to Conchetta Robinson.

Annette Robertson Geesin ('87) retired from Plumsteadville Family Practice in Plumsteadville, Pa., in July 2016 after 24 years of service. She worked clinically for 29 years and now resides in Kitty Hawk, N.C.

Heather Tonga ('89) now lives in Silverton, Ore., and was married to Tim Cramer in August 2016. She works at a family practice clinic for Providence Medical Group in Molalla, Ore.

1990s

Ellen (Yeager) Hartman ('90) is in her 27th year of clinical practice, currently in the primary care department at Kaiser Permanente in Littleton, Colo. She is married to Chris Hartman, who is an architectural model maker and an artist. They have two children and two dogs.

Terri J. Roark ('90) transitioned in 2011 from general orthopedics to pediatric orthopedics at Shriners Hospitals for Children in Spokane, Wash. She has the privilege of traveling to small towns in Honduras to treat children with orthopedic needs.

Marion Wells ('96) lives in Colorado with her husband and 11-year-old daughter. She left clinical practice two years ago to teach at the Red Rocks PA Program.

Lt. Col. Corinne (Barclay) Olivera ('96) will retire in May 2018 from the Alaska Air National Guard after 20 years of service. During her career, Olivera deployed in support of many military contingency operations all over the world including in Iraq, South America and Mongolia. She continues to work her civilian job in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, where she provides urgent and emergency care to oil field workers. Olivera is married to Thomas Graham, has two grandchildren, and hopes to use her GI bill to pursue studies in nutritional health.

Karin (Jones) Weight ('98) moved to England with her husband and young son in 2013 after working many years in urgent care, occupational medicine and family medicine. While living in England she began writing again, became a columnist for an online magazine, and wrote a book about becoming single at midlife. Jones now lives in Washington and her next book is about assisted reproductive technology.

Scott Gibson ('99) is celebrating 15 years working at Duke, 10 of which have been at the Duke Sports Science Institute in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery.

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2000s

Dana Lev Dorenfeld (’00) is married with two children and lives in Charlotte, N.C. She has worked at University Dermatology for the past 17 years.

Liz (Riley) Buno (’04) and her husband, Brett, welcomed a daughter, Lincoln Aurora, on July 28, 2017.

Billie Cartwright (’06) works as a PA in Bend, Ore. She has been with the Internal Medicine Department at Mosaic Medical Clinic since July 2011. In February 2015 she began working part-time with BestCare Treatment Services as part of the Addiction Medicine Team. She received her MAT prescriber waiver in March 2017 and now manages an outpatient suboxone clinic with BestCare. She plans to complete her doctorate in behavioral health from Arizona State University in June 2018.

Cynthia Gary (’09) was awarded Woman of the Year by ACHI Magazine in 2017. The magazine is published by ACHI Women Supporting Women Association, Inc., a nonprofit organization composed of accomplished women, dedicated to supporting educational programs, mentorships and the necessary resources to empower the next generation of women. Gary’s award was based on her work as a physician assistant and writer, and her promotion of health and fitness.

Lindsay (Kuhn) Shade (’06) was married to Mike Shade on Jan. 23, 2016, and welcomed a son, Colin Joseph, on July 29, 2017. In 2017, Shade was a finalist for the Carolinas HealthCare System Teal Acorn Academic Advanced Clinical Practitioner of the Year, an award that she also received in 2015. A commentary she wrote on her role as a PA researcher has been accepted for publication in JAAPA and should be available in 2018.

Heather (Morgan) Call (’09) and Justin Call (’10) welcomed baby boy Wyatt Christopher on Aug. 1, 2017.

Joshua Andrew (’09) was named one of Portland’s Top Physician Assistants 2018 by Portland Monthly magazine. He currently works at Kaiser Sunnyside Medical Center Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery.
Dayna (Hanaka) Dunn ('10) and Ryan Dunn ('10) welcomed daughter Ava Emory on Feb. 26, 2017, in Greensboro, N.C.

Rachel Goldberg ('10) and her husband, Charlie, welcomed their second daughter, Annie, on Nov. 25, 2017. She joins big sister Nora, 3.

Sarah (Baroody) Reed ('10), her husband, Jay, and big sister Stella welcomed Maddison Norma on June 14, 2017.

Chad Eventide ('11) has continued his professional interest working internationally as a PA, which grew in part due to his elective rotation in Sri Lanka during his Duke PA training. He recently completed two years with the National Health Service in the United Kingdom, as part of the National Physician Associate Expansion Programme. He has relocated to Florida to await deployment with the U.S. Department of State, where he will work as a medical examiner with the Foreign Service at U.S. Embassies worldwide. He will be joined by his family — wife Lara; son Caspian, 8; and daughter Starling, 2. An upcoming issue of JAAPA will include a unique patient case report from his time working at a neuro-rehabilitation ward in London.

Reena Reddy ('11) was married to husband Sanjay in July 2017 and lives in Santa Monica, Calif. She works in Los Angeles in a private practice with a hand and upper extremity surgeon.

Kaitlin Pulito ('10) and her family moved to Connecticut two years ago. She practices in primary care and now has two sons — Jack, 3, and Charlie, 10 months.

#WhyDukePA

Alumni, we'd love to hear why you think prospective students should choose Duke for PA school. Send your response to PAalumni@duke.edu and it may be used on social media as part of our upcoming #WhyDukePA campaign.
News from Alumni

2010s, continued

Kristina Sanfilippo (’11) and her husband, Brian, welcomed their third child, Jackson Eugene, on Feb. 3, 2018.

Courtney (Smith) Meyer (’11) was married to Shaun Meyer on June 3, 2017, in her hometown of Asheboro, N.C. After working six years in family medicine, she transitioned to radiation oncology in October 2017.

Bethany (Lepene) Arguello (’12) and Tony Arguello (’12) celebrated the birth of their first child, Abigail Grace, on Nov. 7, 2017.

Jordan Christiansen (’12) continues to work for UNC Physicians Network at Gibbons Family Medicine in Cary, N.C. She now has two little boys, ages 3 and 1.5 years old.

Colleen Regnier (’12) welcomed a baby girl, Jolene Emily, on Sept. 20, 2017. She is the little sister to brothers Everett and Will.

Lindsay (Driver) Clarke (’13) was married on Sept. 16, 2017, to Christopher Clarke. She now works at Bain Dermatology in Raleigh, N.C.

Megan (Koonts) Payne (’14) welcomed her first child, Mary Alanna, on Sept. 11, 2017.

Kathryn Stern (’14) gave birth to baby boy Jack on May 25, 2016. She still works for Cone Health Medical Group HeartCare in Greensboro, N.C.

Elizabeth Riddle (’13) and husband, Scott, welcomed their first child, daughter Emma Lael, on Aug. 25, 2017.

Crystal (Wesockes) Cooper (’13) married Dustin Cooper over Memorial Day weekend in 2017.
Christina (Barba) Pech (’15) was married to Michael Pech on Oct. 1, 2016, in Oxnard, Calif.

Carla (Longanecker) Black (’15) and Jason Black (’15) were married on Oct. 7, 2017, in Destin, Fla. They work at University of Colorado in hematology/oncology and the medical ICU, respectively.

Casey Herdson (’15) and her husband, Michael, welcomed baby girl Harper Elizabeth on Oct. 3, 2017.

Scott Jones (’15) completed the hospitalist residency at University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora, Colo., in January 2017. He currently practices as a critical care PA at the Denver VA Medical Center in Denver. He is married to Luz and has a son, Lucas, 3.

Matthew Klein (’15) was promoted in 2017 to lead PA for neurosurgery at Denver Health. He provides oversight to nine APPs who run the neurosurgical service for a regional level I trauma center.

Holly O’Sullivan (’15) and her husband, Matt, welcomed a baby boy, Tristan Liam, in January 2017. She is in her second year in the neuromuscular division of the Department of Neurology at Duke.

Charita (Montgomery) Bivins (’16) was married to Joshua Bivens on June 24, 2017.

Veronica Crump (’16) and her husband, Joseph, welcomed baby boy Cristian Alexis on July 27, 2017.

Samantha “Niki” Riley (’16) and her husband, Scott, welcomed baby boy Jackson Gray on July 27, 2017.

Forrest Simmons (’16) completed the Duke PA Surgical Residency Program on Sept. 30, 2017. He is now practicing at the Swedish Cancer Institute in Seattle, Wash., with the head and neck surgical oncology team.

Scott Zeller (’16) recently ran the New York City Marathon in his fastest time, which qualified him for the Boston Marathon. He completed his first half ironman triathlon (70.3 miles) in Victoria, British Columbia, in summer 2017. He and Sameera Anwar were officially married in two countries in 2017.

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In Memoriam

Henri Emil Isabella ('72), of Asheville, N.C., died on July 21, 2016, at the age of 72.

Edward D. Huechtker ('75), of Orange Beach, Ala., died on Oct. 18, 2016, at the age of 79. After earning his PA certificate from Duke, Huechtker went on to earn several degrees, including a master’s degree in public and health care administration from the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, and a doctorate in health administration from Warren National University. Prior to his retirement, he worked at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Health Professions as the chair of the Department of Critical Care, was associate professor and a surgical PA. He was a member of many other professional organizations and associations and was an ARC-PA site visitor. In addition, he was a retiree from the United States Coast Guard and also served in the U.S. Army, Navy and the U.S. Marines Corps. A memorial service was held on Oct. 29, 2016, at Holy Spirit Episcopal Church in Gulf Shores, Ala.

Theodore “Terry” J. Smith ('75), of Avon Park, Fla., died on Nov. 19, 2014, at the age of 69. Prior to coming to Duke, he attended Christopher Newport College in Newport News, Va., and worked in the local shipyard and for NASA. After leaving Durham, Smith and his family moved to Avon Park where he worked in family medicine until his passing. A memorial service was held at Lakeview Memorial Gardens in Avon Park on Jan. 24, 2015.

Howard C. Lee ('78), of Cedar Grove, N.C., died on Feb. 26, 2017, at the age of 70. After completing the Duke PA program, he worked as a PA for several years before earning a graduate degree in social work. He then became an individual and family therapist and was a fierce advocate for abused and neglected children.

Kenneth H. Rathey ('78), of Durham, N.C., died on Aug. 29, 2017, at the age of 69. Prior to attending Duke, he served as a medic in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era. As a clinician, he provided services in the neurosurgery and cardiology divisions at Duke and in the neurosurgery and pre-op anesthesia divisions at the Durham VA Medical Center. A service was held on Sept. 2, 2017, at Clements Funeral Home in Durham.

Congratulations to the Duke PA program's newest alumni

Members of the Duke PA Class of 2017 are employed as PAs in the following distribution:

- Internal Medicine (family medicine, pediatrics, general internal medicine) 40%
- Primary Care (family medicine, pediatrics) 26%
- Surgery 23%
- Emergency Medicine 11%
- Neurosurgery and pre-op anesthesia divisions at the Durham VA Medical Center 7%
- Cardiology divisions at Duke 12%
- Neurosurgery 16%
Members of the Duke Physician Assistant Program Class of 2017 completed the program and received their PA certificates on Aug. 4, 2017, making them the newest class of Duke PA alumni and your PA colleagues. The class was awarded Master of Health Sciences degrees from Duke University on May 14, 2017, during the program’s diploma distribution and hooding ceremony at the Washington Duke Inn in Durham.

The Class of 2017 included 89 graduates — 66 women and 23 men — ranging in age from 23 to 47 years old. The class represented 29 states, and 24 graduates resided in North Carolina at the time of enrollment. Ninety-six percent of the graduates were employed as PAs as of early March 2018 and 57 percent of them took their first jobs in North Carolina. Of those, 22 graduates took positions at Duke or Duke-affiliated practices, which is the highest number to date.
Sharon R. Chordas-Buchs, MHS, PA-C (’05), was honored as the 2017 Distinguished Alumna of the Year at the Duke Physician Assistant Program’s commencement ceremony on May 14, 2017. Chordas-Buchs graduated from the PA program in 2005 with a Master of Health Sciences and physician assistant certificate. Prior to entering the Duke PA program, she earned a Bachelor of Health Sciences in Psychology at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Fla. Before becoming a physician assistant, Chordas-Buchs taught mathematics as a public school teacher in Ocala, Fla.

After graduating from the Duke PA program, Chordas-Buchs worked as a family medicine PA in Bellevue, Fla., and then as an emergency medicine PA in Ocala, Fla. In 2008, she joined the faculty of the School of Physician Assistant Studies, University of Florida, as assistant professor. She held the administrative role of director of admissions for five years, and has been associate director since 2014. Chordas-Buchs is a frequent lecturer, course director and small group facilitator for their didactic PA students. She has directed sections of courses such as Clinical Medicine, Clinical Pharmacology and Electrocardiography, and lectures in Laboratory Medicine, Cardiology and Psychiatry. In addition to her full-time faculty position, she practices in emergency medicine and in a voluntary role with the University of Florida’s Mobile Outreach Clinic.

At the School of Physician Assistant Studies, University of Florida, Chordas-Buchs is the chair of the Professional Standards and Promotions Committee and a member of the Interprofessional Education Committee for the university. Among her honors and awards are the Outstanding Academic Instructor Award and the Exemplary Teacher Award, which she has received multiple times since 2010. She is a longtime member of the Florida Academy of Physician Assistants and the American Academy of Physician Assistants. She serves on the Leadership Development and Recruitment Council and is the Awards and Honors Committee chair for the Physician Assistant Education Association.
The Duke Physician Assistant Program’s incoming class contains the highest percentage of underrepresented minorities the program has accepted in more than a decade.

The Class of 2020 will include 10 African-American students, 14 Hispanic students and one Native American student — approximately 28 percent of the 90 students accepted. The Duke PA program has averaged an acceptance rate of 18 percent underrepresented minorities for the past 10 years.

Additionally, 46 percent of accepted students in the Class of 2020 are educationally and/or economically disadvantaged, as determined by Physician Assistant Education Association guidelines. This is the largest percentage since the Class of 2016’s 47 percent.

Over the past two years, the program has refocused recruitment efforts across North Carolina and at a number of historically black colleges and universities across the nation, in addition to taking part in online information sessions and hosting more on-campus sessions. The program uses a holistic approach to candidate selection, which heavily considers life experience and dedication to community service, as opposed to solely focusing on academic performance.

Admissions Coordinator Wendy Elwell, M.S., says this approach has helped attract a very diverse student population.

“While we still look at numbers — we want every person who comes here to have a firm foundation to succeed — we are not, by any means, numbers-driven,” Elwell says. “We look at each unique applicant as a human being. For example, an applicant may be the first person in his/her family to attend college and is doing so while working full time. That applicant may not have a 4.0 GPA or even a 3.5, but that applicant has something that others may not: grit and determination. This is how each of the over 2,400 applications are considered.”

The increase in underrepresented minorities and educationally and/or economically disadvantaged PA students is significant because health care providers need to represent the diversity of the communities they serve, says Jacqueline Barnett, DHSc, MSHS, PA-C, associate professor of community and family medicine and associate program director.

“Diversity matters,” says Barnett, who chairs the admissions committee. “Over the past two years we have worked very hard to further align our admissions process to the program’s mission and I believe these efforts are paying dividends. We know from the literature that underrepresented students are more likely to attend programs they perceive as inclusive and where they see others who look like them. We will continue to work hard to promote inclusion excellence in all aspects of our PA program.”
In October 2017, the Duke PA Research Group received the 2017 PAEA Don Pedersen Research Grant for the project “A National and State Level Analysis of 2016 Job Openings for Physician Assistants,” which will build upon and update the research previously conducted on 2014 jobs data. Grant recipients include:

- Perri Morgan, Ph.D., PA-C, professor, director of PA research
- Melinda Blazar, MHS, PA-C, (’07), assistant professor
- Quincy Jones, MSW, MSH, PA-C, (’09), medical instructor
- Brandi Leach, Ph.D., research analyst

In March 2018, the Duke PA Research Group received a $50,000 grant from the Physician Assistant Education Association to investigate best practices in onboarding new PAs. The project aims to inform the PA community and hiring organizations about the need for intentional and effective onboarding for new PAs and about potential approaches to the onboarding process. Grant recipients include:

- Perri Morgan, Ph.D., PA-C, professor, director of PA research
- Mara Sanchez, MMS, PA-C, assistant professor
- Quincy Jones, MSW, MSH, PA-C, (’09), medical instructor
- Brandi Leach, Ph.D., research analyst

The Duke Physician Assistant Program was well represented at the PAEA Education Forum in Denver, Colo., in October 2017. Duke PA faculty and staff presenters included:

- Jacqueline Barnett, DHSc, MSHS, PA-C, associate professor
- Melinda Blazar, MHS, PA-C, (’07), assistant professor
- Nicholas Hudak, MPA, MSEd, PA-C, associate professor
- Quincy Jones, MSW, LCSW, MHS, PA-C, (’09), medical instructor
- Andrea Martin, B.A., director of communications, Dept. of Community and Family Medicine
- Betsy Melcher, MS, ATC, MHS, PA-C, (’05), assistant professor
- Perri Morgan, Ph.D., PA-C, professor
- Mara Sanchez, MMS, PA-C, assistant professor
- Haley Schomburg, MTS, instructional media designer
- April Stouder, MHS, PA-C, (’00), associate professor
- Annamarie Streilein, MHS, PA-C, (’95), assistant professor
Five local clinicians — also preceptors to Duke University medical, nursing and physician assistant students — completed a three-day Primary Care Training and Enhancement Program Faculty Development Mini-Fellowship at the Duke Physician Assistant Program last June.

Mini-fellowship participants were:

- **Taineisha Bolden, M.D.** - Roxboro Family Medicine & Immediate Care, Roxboro, N.C.
- **Joshua Lancaster, M.D.** - Lincoln Community Health Center, Durham, N.C.
- **Tami A. Lee, MHS, PA-C, (’04)** - Roxboro Family Medicine & Immediate Care, Roxboro, N.C.
- **Noah Wichman, MHS, PA-C, (’03)** - Roxboro Family Medicine & Immediate Care, Roxboro, N.C.

The goal of the mini-fellowship is to equip preceptors to become effective clinician educators who can develop and implement curricula, and facilitate group QI projects that will address needs of vulnerable populations in North Carolina. The mini-fellowship was part of a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant awarded to Duke University in 2016 for primary care training and enhancement.

Read more about the grant and future mini-fellowship opportunities: bit.ly/primary-care-training
Jacqueline Barnett, DHSc, MSHS, PA-C, was promoted to associate professor in 2017.

Melinda Blazar, MHS, PA-C, ('07), assistant professor, received the Preceptor of the Year Award from the Association of Physician Assistants in Obstetrics and Gynecology (APAOG). The award recognizes an individual who has committed themselves to mentoring and developing future PAs in women’s health.

Patricia McKelvey Dieter, MPA, PA-C, professor, was appointed by the Secretary of DHHS to the Advisory Committee on Training in Primary Care Medicine and Dentistry, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

Christine Everett, Ph.D., MPH, PA-C, was promoted to associate professor in 2017.

Megan Holmes, Ph.D., was inducted into Pi Alpha at the Duke PA Class of 2017’s certificate ceremony. Holmes was promoted to assistant professor in 2018.

Nicholas Hudak, MSED, MPA, PA-C, was promoted to associate professor in 2017.

Jan Victoria Scott, MHS, PA-C, ('81), associate consulting professor, was awarded the Henry “Buddy” Lee Treadwell Award by the Class of 2017. The award is named after Treadwell, who was considered the “prototype PA,” and greatly influenced the vision of Eugene A. Stead Jr., M.D., for PA education and function.

April Stouder, MHS, PA-C, ('00), was awarded the recognition of Distinguished Fellow by the American Academy of Physician Assistants. She was recognized for her leadership in clinical practice, professional involvement and commitment to lifelong learning. Stouder also was selected as a fellow for the 2018 class of the Duke Clinical Leadership Program. Sponsored by the Office of the Chancellor for Health Affairs, the leadership development program is designed for mid-career clinical faculty who show high potential to assume larger leadership roles across Duke Health. Additionally, Stouder was promoted to associate professor in 2018.
Meet Anthony Viera, chair of the Department of Community and Family Medicine

Anthony J. Viera, M.D., MPH, professor of community and family medicine, began his role as chair of the Department of Community and Family Medicine on Oct. 1, 2017. He came to Duke from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was a professor in the Department of Family Medicine and held appointments as adjunct professor in the Department of Epidemiology and in the Public Health Leadership Program.

Viera is a nationally recognized researcher focused on cardiovascular disease prevention with a special interest in hypertension and out-of-office blood pressure monitoring. He is also interested in behavioral economics as a strategy to promote healthful eating and physical activity. Viera has published nearly 200 articles, book chapters, monographs and books. Recognized as a fellow of the American Heart Association, he has been the principal investigator on numerous grants from the NIH and other funding agencies. He also has played an active role in the education of medical students, residents and fellows.

As chair of the Department of Community & Family Medicine, Viera hopes to build on the department’s long history of strong ties to the community, the education of PAs, family medicine physicians and occupational medicine physicians, capitalize on opportunities for collaboration across departments at Duke in areas such as research, and stay on the cutting edge of the latest trends in technology and patient care delivery, all while meeting the needs of the health care workforce of the future.

Karen Hills exits Duke for new role at PAEA

Karen Hills, M.S., PA-C, professor emeritus, exited the role of director of the Duke Physician Assistant Program in 2017 to join the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) in a newly developed role as chief of educational development.

Hills served as director of the Duke PA program since 2013, and previously served as associate program director from 2005 to 2012 and clinical coordinator from 2002 to 2005. Hills came to Duke as a teaching fellow in 2001. She received a B.A. from Wake Forest University in 1983, an M.S. from American University in 1988, and a PA certificate from Wake Forest University in 1999.

In her role with PAEA, Hills is expanding faculty development services and looking at curricular offerings and resources that could be helpful to PA programs and faculty. Hills said she will look back on her time at Duke fondly, remembering all the people she worked with and the students she taught.

“I started as a teaching fellow, had the opportunity to be clinical coordinator, associate program director, and then to be a program director of the top PA program in the country,” Hills said. “How could anyone ask for a better career?”

Meet Anthony Viera, chair of the Department of Community and Family Medicine

Karen Hills exits Duke for new role at PAEA
New Faculty

Kimberly Howard, MHS, PA-C ('09), joined the faculty of the Duke Physician Assistant Program in January 2015 as co-coordinator of the surgery unit, becoming the sole coordinator in June 2017. In her faculty role, she participates in the planning, development and evaluation of the surgery course, coordinating lectures and laboratory sessions. She also continues to work full time in thoracic surgery at Duke.

Howard received the Master of Health Sciences degree and physician assistant certificate in 2009 from the Duke PA program. Prior to that, she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics in 1999 followed by a Master of Arts in Teaching in 2001 from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Ore.

Martha (Marty) Nelson, MHS, PA-C ('02), joined the faculty of the Duke Physician Assistant Program in October 2017 as the pediatric unit coordinator. While her primary contribution is to provide coordination of the pediatrics unit of the Clinical Medicine course, she also assists the clinical year team with development of pediatric rotations within the Duke Health enterprise and participates in other educational activities in the PA program as warranted.

Nelson has provided direct clinical care to children with obesity at Duke’s Healthy Lifestyles clinic for more than 10 years. Prior to that she worked as a PA in a rural primary care pediatric setting for five years. Her areas of interest include obesity set point theory, motivational interviewing, chronic disease prevention and management, adverse childhood events and food insecurity.

Nelson received the Master of Health Sciences degree and physician assistant certificate in 2002 from the Duke PA program. Prior to that she was a Peace Corps Volunteer ('93-'95) and received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Ala.

New Staff

Kate Holeman, B.A., joined the Duke PA program staff as clinical year program coordinator in July 2017. She has been employed at Duke for 20 years, most recently in the Department of Community & Family Medicine chair’s office as assistant to the vice chair for education. She also worked in Graduate Medical Education at Duke for several years. Holeman works with the clinical year team to plan, assign and coordinate all student rotations, student housing, onboarding paperwork for sites and clinical affiliation agreements.

Kathryn Moore, B.A., joined the Duke PA program staff as preclinical staff specialist in June 2017 as preclinical staff specialist. Prior to joining the staff, she worked with North Carolina State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine as an administrative assistant and house officer coordinator. She assists faculty and the preclinical team in providing curricular support.
Rachel Porter, Ph.D., joined the Duke PA program staff in December 2017 as education technology specialist. She earned her B.A. in elementary education in 2000 from UNC Wilmington, her MEd in curriculum and instruction in 2009 and doctorate in education research and policy in 2013 from North Carolina State University. Prior to joining the PA program staff, Rachel worked for more than a decade in educator training and nonprofit management. She will be assisting faculty in using instructional technologies in the curriculum as well as providing curricular support.
Faculty News

Faculty Publications

Peer-Reviewed Publications


Other Publications


The Class of 2017 was the first Duke PA class to participate in a Second-Year Giving Campaign — a new initiative that encourages second-year students to support the Duke Physician Assistant Program through a class donation to any of the three student scholarship funds. The goal was to reach 100 percent class participation with any donation amount, even as low as $1. Students who donated $20.17 (representative of their graduation year) or more received an alumni lapel pin, and all donors were recognized on a website dedicated to the campaign.

The six-week campaign began in June 2017 and lasted until the class’ completion date on Aug. 4, 2017. Students donated a total of $760.57 with a 42 percent participation rate. Patricia McKelvey Dieter, MPA, PA-C, division chief and interim program director, matched the gift.

“I’m so proud of these students,” says Jennifer Pennington, alumni coordinator and organizer of the campaign. “They were excited about giving back to the program and supporting the new crop of PA students. I think it instilled in them the spirit of giving and helped reinforce that any dollar amount can make a difference.”

Students were able to donate to the scholarship fund of their choice — the General, Striver or Global Health PA Scholarship funds.

Class of 2017 Student Donor Wall

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We thank all of our donors who have given to the PA scholarship fund and gifts at any level make a difference. Below we recognize our donors giving at the Member level and higher.

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http://instagram.com/dukepastudents
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony J. Viera, MD, MPH</td>
<td>Chair, Department of Community and Family Medicine</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anthony.viera@duke.edu">anthony.viera@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia McKeelvey Dieter, MPA, PA-C</td>
<td>PA Division Chief, Interim Program Director</td>
<td><a href="mailto:patricia.dieter@duke.edu">patricia.dieter@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline S. Barnett, DHSc, MSHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Associate Program Director</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jacqueline.barnett@duke.edu">jacqueline.barnett@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Gradison, MD, MHS-CL</td>
<td>Medical Director</td>
<td><a href="mailto:maggie.gradison@duke.edu">maggie.gradison@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovest T. Alexander, Jr., MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Director of Diversity and Inclusion</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lovest.alexander@duke.edu">lovest.alexander@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorraine Anglin, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Academic Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lorraine.anglin@duke.edu">lorraine.anglin@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda Blazar, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Clinical Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:melinda.blazar@duke.edu">melinda.blazar@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Everett, PhD, MPH, PA-C</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:christine.everett@duke.edu">christine.everett@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan T. Hibbard, PhD</td>
<td>Director of Assessment and Evaluation</td>
<td><a href="mailto:susan.hibbard@duke.edu">susan.hibbard@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan Holmes, PhD</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:megan.holmes@duke.edu">megan.holmes@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberly Howard, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Surgery Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kimberly.howard@duke.edu">kimberly.howard@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas M. Hudak, MEd, MPA, PA-C</td>
<td>Clinical Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nick.hudak@duke.edu">nick.hudak@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quincy Jones, MSW, LCSW, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Medical Instructor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:quinnette.jones@duke.edu">quinnette.jones@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy Melcher, MS, ATC, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Academic Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:betsy.melcher@duke.edu">betsy.melcher@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Mesaros, PharmD, BCPS</td>
<td>Associate Consulting Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jean.mesaros@duke.edu">jean.mesaros@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perri Morgan, PhD, PA-C</td>
<td>Director of Research</td>
<td><a href="mailto:perri.morgan@duke.edu">perri.morgan@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha Nelson, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Pediatric Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:martha.nelson@duke.edu">martha.nelson@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandro Pinheiro, PhD, MA, MRE</td>
<td>Senior Education Specialist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sandro.pinheiro@duke.edu">sandro.pinheiro@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy R. Robinson, MS, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Director of Curriculum</td>
<td><a href="mailto:peggy.robinson@duke.edu">peggy.robinson@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mara Sanchez, MMS, PA-C</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mara.sanchez@duke.edu">mara.sanchez@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Victoria Scott, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Associate Consulting Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:victoria.scott@duke.edu">victoria.scott@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April Stouder, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Director of Clinical Education</td>
<td><a href="mailto:april.stouder@duke.edu">april.stouder@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justine Strand de Oliveira, DrPH, PA-C</td>
<td>Professor Emeritus</td>
<td><a href="mailto:justine.strand@duke.edu">justine.strand@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annamarie F. Streilein, MHS, PA-C</td>
<td>Director of Preclinical Education</td>
<td><a href="mailto:annamarie.streilein@duke.edu">annamarie.streilein@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Ayscue</td>
<td>Financial Specialist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:maria.ayscue@duke.edu">maria.ayscue@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Connery</td>
<td>Information Services Specialist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:michael.connery@duke.edu">michael.connery@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Darran</td>
<td>Assessment Program Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rachel.darran@duke.edu">rachel.darran@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Davis</td>
<td>Information Services Specialist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:donna.davis@duke.edu">donna.davis@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Elwell, MS</td>
<td>Admissions Program Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wendy.elwell@duke.edu">wendy.elwell@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Ervington</td>
<td>Staff Assistant</td>
<td><a href="mailto:catherine.ervington@duke.edu">catherine.ervington@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhianon Giles</td>
<td>Staff Specialist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rhianon.giles@duke.edu">rhianon.giles@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Holeman</td>
<td>Clinical Program Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kate.holeman@duke.edu">kate.holeman@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene Lynch</td>
<td>Administrative Secretary</td>
<td><a href="mailto:irene.lynch@duke.edu">irene.lynch@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn Moore</td>
<td>Staff Specialist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kathryn.m.moore@duke.edu">kathryn.m.moore@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Pennington</td>
<td>Alumni Program Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jennifer.pennington@duke.edu">jennifer.pennington@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Porter, PhD</td>
<td>Educational Technology Specialist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rachel.porter@duke.edu">rachel.porter@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haley Schomburg, MTS</td>
<td>Instructional Media Designer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:haley.schomburg@duke.edu">haley.schomburg@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane Spell</td>
<td>Administrative Manager</td>
<td><a href="mailto:diane.spell@duke.edu">diane.spell@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Stem</td>
<td>Pre-Clinical Program Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jan.stem@duke.edu">jan.stem@duke.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Duke Physician Assistant Program’s mission is to educate caring, competent primary care physician assistants who practice evidence-based medicine, are leaders in the profession, dedicated to their communities, culturally sensitive, and devoted to positive transformation of the health care system.

Let Us Hear From You!

Alumni are interested in hearing from you! Send us a note about your professional activities, any “demographic” changes (marriage, children, moves), honors, newspaper articles or anything else you would like to share.

Please send your note to:
Jennifer Pennington
Dept. of CFM - DUMC 104780
Durham, North Carolina 27710
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Madison, granddaughter of Bill Vaassen (’74), shows her school spirit!