

# Impact

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of research, teaching  
and patient care



**Cardiovascular perfusion  
program empowers students  
to pursue leadership roles**

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On the cover, from left to right:  
Nancy Torres  
Julie Collins, CCP, LP, MS  
Paige Abdella



“At the College of Health Sciences, our outstanding faculty, alumni and students continue to demonstrate their **unique brand of leadership across the allied health sciences.**”

**Jason S. Turner**, PhD, MAE, interim dean, College of Health Sciences

## Leading together toward a hopeful future

In times of transition, the best-led organizations understand that their strength lies in their people. That is certainly the case at the College of Health Sciences (CHS), where our outstanding faculty, alumni and students continue to demonstrate their unique brand of leadership across the allied health sciences.

Since 1975, CHS has consistently produced exceptional graduates who have made their mark across a variety of disciplines. Our programs have not only earned national reputations, but they have also been a steady source of innovative clinical and research advances that have elevated the quality of health care, here and across the country.

We have many leaders to thank for this strength and stability, including Charlotte Royeen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, FASAHP, FNAP, who recently retired after serving as dean of CHS for nearly a decade. I am excited to build on her legacy and continue to support a thriving community of learners, educators and researchers here at CHS.

I am also pleased to welcome back Robert S.D. Higgins, MD, MSHA, our incoming president and chief academic officer of RUSH University and chief academic officer, senior vice president of RUSH. Dr. Higgins is an exemplary leader who shares RUSH's strong commitment to the communities we serve.



That commitment to service is an integral part of what makes CHS a leader in educating the next generation of allied health professionals. Each day, members of the RUSH community are finding better ways to care for under-resourced populations in Chicago and beyond. They are also tenaciously advocating for change and discovering new means to improve the patient experience. They are the reason why I am so hopeful about the future, even in the face of the significant challenges affecting health care today.

In this issue of *Impact*, you will find stories highlighting the extraordinary leadership of our faculty, students and

alumni. In a variety of ways, these forward-thinking leaders are solving real-world problems and contributing to a more optimistic future. They give me hope for tomorrow, and I am honored to share their inspiring stories with you and hope they will motivate you to take the lead on something you are passionate about today.

**Jason S. Turner**, PhD, MAE  
Interim Dean, College of Health Sciences





Zebedee Cluff (far left) recruited 55 fellow students from the PA studies program to serve as medical volunteers for the 2023 Chicago Marathon. He also served as the student legislative representative to the American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA).

# RUSH PAs demonstrate leadership in advocacy and other roles

Leaders step up to advocate for others, a quality that RUSH alumni like Zebedee Cluff exemplify.

Cluff, who graduated from RUSH in 2023 and now works in urology at Northwestern Medicine, earned a reputation as a leader and problem-solver at RUSH. Elected by his fellow classmates to serve as the student legislative representative to the American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA), he worked with RUSH's Office of Student Life and Engagement to secure funding for more than half of his fellow classmates to attend the national conference. "It was a great opportunity to work with the university at large, and to advocate for us as students and as PAs to make sure that we're highly educated and well connected," Cluff says.

Cluff, who is from Salt Lake City, also served as a student

representative on RUSH's systemwide LGBTQ Leadership Council and helped implement the pronoun badge-toppers at RUSH that create an inclusive environment for staff, students and patients. "It's such a simple thing, but it communicates a lot to patients that we care," he says.

In addition to his advocacy work, Cluff completed a global health trip to the Dominican Republic last September. While in Santo Domingo, he was part of a team providing primary care to more than 400 adults and children.

Closer to home, he also recruited 55 fellow PA students to serve as medical volunteers for the 2023 Chicago Marathon. "It was a nice way to give back to the community and highlight our abilities as PAs to provide care in all sorts of settings, even in the middle of one of the biggest marathons in the country," he says.

## Abundant resources for leadership

Leading through advocacy is also important to second-year PA student Shay Schwimmer, who came to his "dream school," RUSH — ranked one of the top 50 PA programs by *U.S. News & World Report* — after earning his master's in public health while working as a paramedic.

"Being politically active is important to me, not only for the community that I'm helping, but also for the physician assistant profession," says Schwimmer, who aims to work as a family medicine provider after he graduates.

Schwimmer, who is from New Lenox, Ill., serves as the student representative for the Illinois Academy of Physician Assistants (IAPA). In his role, he is responsible for informing and engaging student liaisons from every PA program in Illinois. "I try to make sure they feel like they have a voice and can bring up ideas," he says. He also shares legislative updates with his fellow classmates at RUSH.

"I never would have found IAPA if it wasn't for RUSH in the first place," Schwimmer says. "RUSH makes it very apparent from the first day you're here that they have all the resources available for you to go into leadership."

Schwimmer says RUSH's program excels in providing opportunities for students to talk with legislators, network and grow as professionals. In February 2023, Schwimmer and a few classmates (including Cluff) from RUSH attended Lobby Day in Springfield, Ill., to advocate for a bill that would remove the requirement for a written collaborative agreement with a physician for PAs working in federally qualified health centers (FQHCs). The bill was signed into law last June and went into effect in January 2024.

## Lighting the way through advocacy

Kayla Martinez, assistant professor for PA studies and the faculty liaison for IAPA, appreciates seeing students like Cluff and Schwimmer get involved in advocacy. She credits the faculty for providing creative ways for students to advocate for the profession. "As educators, we're showing

students that, on an individual level, we can make a difference and shape our career," she says.

Martinez is also a member of IAPA's legislative committee, which worked on the bill empowering PAs working in FQHCs. Another recent legislative win was adding PAs to a bill to allow them to sign death certificates. "This is important as many PAs act as primary care providers, and this reduces delays in the family being able to make arrangements," Martinez says.

While successes like these are rewarding, Martinez also enjoys observing how students' confidence and leadership abilities evolve during their time at RUSH. "The highlight for me is watching students grow during our two-and-a-half-year program," she says. "By the time they graduate, they're ready to be our colleagues, and it's really impressive."

**"RUSH makes it very apparent from the first day that you're here that they have all the resources available for you to go into leadership."**

**Shay Schwimmer**, second-year PA student involved in advocacy work



RUSH PA studies faculty, alumni and students met with Illinois representatives on Lobby Day 2024. The large group included Zebedee Cluff (second from left, back row), Regina Chen, PhD, PA-C (middle, back row), Kayla Martinez, MS, PA-C (third from right, back row) and Shay Schwimmer (far right, front row).





The HSM Alumni Association Board at a recent alumni event. From left to right: Lindsey Zimmerman (2024), Sydney Johnson (2019), Taylor Winn (2017), Amina Shuaipaj (2025), Gia Gradowski (2022), Benjamin Gonzalez San Martin (2017), Aubree Larson (2021), Tesheena Horn (2024) and Sara Ruesewald (2025). Members not pictured: Kari Kosog (2019) and Mary Kate Wainwright (2019).

## Top 3 HSM program builds leaders the industry needs

When Benjamin Gonzalez San Martin was choosing a master's program in health systems management (HSM), he didn't want to attend a large university where he would "just be a number." Today, he is grateful that he earned his master's from RUSH in 2017.

"Everyone at RUSH is willing to give you individualized attention, and that's what really separates RUSH from other universities," says Gonzalez San Martin, who is currently a senior financial analyst with Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse, Wis.

This unwavering focus on students has helped propel RUSH's HSM program to a coveted ranking among the top 3 programs in the country, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

### A focus on leadership

RUSH's top 3 ranking also recognizes the program's outstanding faculty, who as teacher-practitioners are taking a lead role in transforming health care. One example is Wayne Lerner, DrPH, FACHE, longtime faculty

member and former chairperson of the Department of Health Systems Management. In 2013, Lerner received the American College of Healthcare Executives Gold Medal Award, its highest honor for career excellence.

Lerner, former CEO of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and Holy Cross Hospital in Chicago, understands the value of cultivating leadership in the next generation of health systems executives and those who aim to work in technology and health care startups. "We're teaching students how to be leaders not only through our discipline-based material like economics or finance, but also by example because our faculty themselves are practicing, so students are introduced to various leadership styles," says Lerner, who currently teaches students in the executive track.

Through group work, HSM students also learn leadership skills like collaboration, negotiation and crisis management. "A good leader recognizes when they should step into a leadership void during an emergency, or when somebody else belongs in that situation," he says.

Reflecting on his career, Lerner finds great satisfaction from teaching future health care leaders who want to make a difference. "I get tremendous joy working with students," he says. "And I tell them if they pay it forward, they will help improve the health care field over the long term."



From left to right: HSM faculty Wayne Lerner, DrPH, FACHE, and Diane Howard, PhD, FACHE, celebrate the program's ranking.

**"We're teaching students how to be leaders not only through our discipline-based material like economics or finance, but also by example because our faculty themselves are practicing, so students are introduced to various leadership styles."**

**Wayne Lerner**, DrPH, FACHE, longtime faculty member and former chairperson of the Department of Health Systems Management

### A lasting connection

Beyond benefiting from the experience of faculty like Lerner, HSM students in both the executive and residential tracks also receive valuable coaching from a variety of advisors. Incoming first-year students are paired with second-year peers, providing valuable mentorship on everything from classes to the best places to eat in Chicago. Students also receive a teaching advisor who provides support with courses, as well as an alumni career advisor working in students' desired field.

For graduates like Gonzalez San Martin, who serves as president of the HSM Alumni Association, the relationships formed with advisors can be long-lasting. "These people have made such an impression on my life," he says. "I feel like they're in my court, whether that's 10 years or 20 years from now."



# Professional development series prepares undergrads for lifelong success

Being a successful allied health professional takes more than getting good grades — it also requires understanding yourself and others. For this reason, RUSH offers the Professional and Personal Roadmap of Opportunities (PRO) to undergraduates in the health sciences, imaging sciences and vascular ultrasound programs.

## Benefits of PRO

Every semester, undergraduates at RUSH take part in PRO workshops that help them thrive inside and outside the classroom, says Kenya McGuire Johnson, PT, MA, CHC, assistant professor and manager of student professional and career development for undergraduate studies.

First-year workshops focus on preparing students for academic success. For example, students lead presentations in front of their classmates to build confidence and communication skills. They also explore their learning style and discover valuable ways to improve their study habits. “While the coursework is designed to benefit everyone, it can be especially valuable to first-generation college students or older students returning to school after a break,” Johnson says.

In their second year, undergraduates partake in workshops on identity development based on principles from The Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project, a national organization that promotes learning through identity development. These workshops, which include carefully curated discussion topics every week, build self-awareness that helps graduates succeed in their chosen fields, Johnson says. “During the workshops, students reflect on their own stories and how those stories impact their sense of belonging, biases and how they may treat others,” says Johnson, who is also director of diversity, equity and inclusion for the College of Health Sciences.

“Better understanding their own stories and hearing other people’s stories helps them become more informed practitioners and future leaders.”



Through the Professional and Personal Roadmap of Opportunities (PRO), RUSH undergraduates practice public speaking and gain other skills that will help them in a variety of settings. From left to right: Josué Cordon and Arkasha McDaniel.

## Finding balance and a path forward

Students value RUSH’s unique, deliberate approach to personal and professional development and how it helps them recognize their potential. “At other universities, you cannot get the opportunities afforded to us as undergraduates at RUSH,” says Clarissa Slowik, who earned a BSHS from RUSH in 2023. “The professional development at RUSH enhanced the leadership skills that I didn’t realize I already had.”

PRO helped Slowik boost her academic skills and find the balance she needed when she first started at RUSH. “Being a wife, mother and full-time student, I realized I couldn’t pour from an empty cup, so self-care was my main focus

for the first year,” says Slowik, who lives in Justice, Ill. For her, finding balance often involved working on crafts with her daughter or taking a family hike so she could focus on the present moment.

In addition, completing the second-year PRO content on identity helped Slowik build empathy for people with different experiences. “It has helped me understand where people are coming from and made my brain slow down during conversations or in situations where I don’t know everything,” she says. “It’s also helped me grow as an individual and as a professional.”

Her undergraduate work at RUSH also set her on the path to achieving her career goals. “Through the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences program, I found my calling in nursing,” says Slowik, who was accepted into RUSH’s Generalist Entry Master’s (GEM) in Nursing program and plans to pursue her doctorate of nursing practice so she can become a gynecologic oncology provider.

**“The professional development at RUSH enhanced the leadership skills that I didn’t realize I already had.”**

**Clarissa Slowik**, who was accepted into RUSH’s Generalist Entry Master’s (GEM) in Nursing and plans to pursue her doctorate of nursing practice

## Validating others’ experiences

Nada Elagha, BS, RVT, who graduated from the Bachelor of Science in Vascular Ultrasound program in 2023 and is now a registered vascular sonographer with MIMIT Health in Chicago, has been using some of the lessons she learned in PRO in her new role as a clinical preceptor teaching students about ultrasound.

“I can apply what I learned in PRO because I’m the front line for these new students,” she says, adding that one of her key takeaways from PRO was the importance of self-care as a health care provider. “We have to be able to hold ourselves up before we can hold someone else up.”

Elagha, who was raised in the Chicago area, applied to RUSH’s vascular ultrasound program because she liked health care and thought her degree would open doors. She especially enjoyed the SEED curriculum and discussing sociopolitical issues that can affect how allied health professionals relate to their patients. As a provider, Elagha has integrated those lessons into her current work to enhance the patient experience. “To me, it’s very important that any time I have a patient, I’m continuously validating how they’re feeling,” she says.



Clarissa Slowik learned the value of self-care, such as taking a break from schoolwork to work on crafts with her daughter, while an undergraduate at RUSH.



Nada Elagha, BS, RVT, graduated from the Bachelor of Science in Vascular Ultrasound program in 2023 and uses lessons she learned at RUSH to improve the patient experience.





From left to right: Ricky Ramirez, OTD, OTR/L, QMHP; Steven Taylor, PhD, OTD, OTR/L; Bridget Hahn, OTD, OTR/L; Laura VanPuymbrouck, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA; OTD student Nora Harvel; OTD student Lauren Simons; and Piper Hansen, OTD, OTR/L, BCPR, (seated) demonstrate one of the Anatomage tables at RUSH.

## Using technology to train future OTDs

As a second-year occupational therapy doctorate (OTD) student and anatomy tutor, Lauren Simons knows how challenging it can be for first-year students to learn the structure of the human body. To help students gain more confidence with this foundational subject, Simons turns to cutting-edge technology tools called Anatomage tables. These highly advanced anatomy visualization and virtual dissection tools allow students to see inside digital bodies.

“Anatomage tables are a great tool to help supplement the content that first-year OTD students learn from anatomy lectures, discussions and cadaver lab sessions,” says Simons, who is originally from Somers, N.Y. She often uses the two tables at RUSH to create quizzes in her tutoring sessions and prepare students for their exams.

### Providing another opportunity for interactive learning

“In the OTD program, we focus mostly on muscles and nerves located throughout the body,” says Nora Harvel, a second-year OTD student and anatomy tutor for first-year OTD students. “Using the Anatomage tables, we can isolate specific muscles and nerves and make them easily visible and identifiable to the students.”

Harvel, who is from Crystal Lake, Ill., was drawn to RUSH’s OTD program for the individualized learning experience it provides students. “I chose the OTD program at RUSH because I knew that I would get a great clinical experience and the class size was small, allowing for a more individualized learning experience,” she says. “We get hands-on experience during our first semester and continue to be exposed to occupational therapy throughout the rest of the program. Overall, the program prepares students to be amazing, entry-level OTs.”

Simons agrees, adding that the early hands-on experience allows students to build their knowledge and become proficient and well-rounded clinical OTs. When selecting her OTD program, Simons was drawn to RUSH by the faculty. “I chose RUSH OTD because of how passionate and kind all the faculty are and how willing they are to help me as a student in my journey of learning to be an OT,” Simons says.

### Leading OTD education by embracing technology

RUSH’s two Anatomage tables are just one example of how the OTD program is utilizing technology to prepare the next generation of occupational therapists. OTD students can also experiment with Moxie robots, which use artificial intelligence to engage children in meaningful play while supporting child development. In addition, aspiring OTs at RUSH can learn to use 3D printing to create customized prosthetics, splints and other devices for patients.

Embracing technology to prepare future OT leaders has helped RUSH’s OTD program earn a ranking among the nation’s top 20 programs by *U.S. News & World Report*.

“We’re striving for excellence and innovation in everything we do, and without technology, we wouldn’t have the opportunity to be leaders who are advancing the profession of occupational therapy,” says Becky Ozelie, DHS, OTR/L, FAOTA, chairperson of the Department of Occupational Therapy and OTD program director.

**“We’re striving for excellence and innovation in everything we do, and without technology, we wouldn’t have the opportunity to be leaders who are advancing the profession of occupational therapy.”**

**Becky Ozelie**, DHS, OTR/L, FAOTA, chairperson of the Department of Occupational Therapy and OTD program director



## Program helps chaplains elevate their leadership competencies

In the post-pandemic era, chaplains face significant demands, from demonstrating the value of their spiritual care programs to addressing persistent issues like racial disparities in health. To help spiritual care managers lead their organizations in addressing these challenges, faculty from RUSH's Transforming Chaplaincy project and the Department of Health Systems Management (HSM) have partnered on a program in spiritual care management and leadership.

### Nationally recognized excellence

The initiative combines the best of the two programs: Transforming Chaplaincy has earned a reputation for its spiritual care research and education, while RUSH's HSM programs are ranked among the top 3 in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*.

"RUSH was an early leader in creating an evidence base that transforms the professional practice of spiritual care, and this program with our HSM faculty is a natural outgrowth of that," says Clayton Thomason, JD, MDiv, associate professor and chairperson of the Department of Religion, Health and Human Values.

### Relevant chaplain coursework

Participants take part in online and in-person seminars, as well as an applied learning project. Coursework, with case examples customized for spiritual care managers, develops competencies in areas such as strategic orientation, business literacy and financial skills, human resource management, and process and quality improvement. Such competencies are needed to help spiritual care managers develop an effective leadership mindset, says Andy Garman, PsyD, professor in the Department of Health Systems Management and past CEO of the National Center for Healthcare Leadership.

"It's important to approach the work differently as a leader versus someone who is providing direct spiritual care," says Garman, one of the program's lead faculty. "When you're a

provider, the patient or family in front of you is your sole focus, but when you're a leader, your focus is on how to best steward a finite set of resources to optimize care for your community."

Empowering spiritual care leaders could help transform health care organizations and improve the staff and patient experience, Garman explains. "Spiritual care leaders are a hugely valuable and underutilized resource to senior leadership in understanding what's going on culturally within an organization and where the stress and pain points are," he says. "There's more appreciation for that in health systems that have spiritual care as part of their mission, but there's a lot of opportunity there for health care leaders generally."

**"RUSH was an early leader in creating an evidence base that transforms the professional practice of spiritual care, and this program with our HSM faculty is a natural outgrowth of that."**

**Clayton Thomason**, JD, MDiv, chairperson of the Department of Religion, Health and Human Values



Participants from the 2023 cohort, joined by several faculty members, celebrate completion of the program.

## Research projects prepare future allied health leaders

Twice a week, second-year doctor of audiology (AuD) student Alexis Dueñas helps preschoolers at homeless shelters improve their school-readiness skills as part of a multidisciplinary research project. For the first-generation Latina college student from Nevada, planning a variety of activities for children — and providing interpreting services for native Spanish-speakers — has been a unique learning experience that will help her pursue her chosen occupation.

"My position in this project has taught me leadership skills that I will carry over to my career as an audiologist," Dueñas says. "Working with children has taught me to be flexible and to think fast under pressure. Due to their varied attention spans and energy levels, I've learned to adapt to my clients' needs regardless of the planned agenda."

### Insights into under-resourced populations

For Dueñas, the research opportunity through the College of Health Sciences has also shed light on the struggles that under-resourced populations face and how she can better accommodate their needs. "I am now more aware of how priorities may differ, how transportation may be an issue, how I can improve health literacy and much more," she says. "All of these factors will help me become a better, more well-rounded clinician as I go out to serve my community through the field of audiology."



Second-year AuD student Alexis Dueñas (seated on couch) practices leading a reading group as part of a multidisciplinary research project that helps preschoolers at homeless shelters.

Like many allied health students, Dueñas chose her career path — and RUSH — so she could have a positive impact on patients' lives. "RUSH has given me the opportunity to be involved with my community and help serve under-resourced populations," she adds.

### Opportunities for research

Students from every program at the college have a myriad of opportunities to work on research projects that will help them thrive in their future careers.

"Involving students in research can offer several advantages regarding leadership development, including critical thinking, problem solving and communication," says Lauren Little, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, associate dean of research for CHS and associate professor of occupational therapy. "In research, students have to think on their feet, problem-solve through many situations and communicate effectively with a variety of individuals from different backgrounds."

Research is part of the college's commitment to developing the next generation of allied health leaders. "Integrating students into research experiences contributes to the holistic development of leadership skills, combining academic knowledge with practical skills that are invaluable in various professional settings," Little says.

**"Involving students in research can offer several advantages regarding leadership development, including critical thinking, problem solving and communication."**

**Lauren Little**, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, associate dean of research for CHS and associate professor of occupational therapy





When Victoria Gonzalez is not pursuing her master's in clinical nutrition, the international first-year student explores Chicago.

# Clinical nutrition students find the ingredients for success at RUSH

Back in her native Mexico, Victoria Gonzalez was already practicing as a dietitian. But to realize her dream of becoming a registered dietitian in the United States, she would first need to earn a master's degree from a U.S. program. She chose RUSH.

"International students struggle a lot to get to a certain point, and it's comforting to find an opportunity that's actually going to help me get to where I want to be," she says. "I put all my bets on RUSH because of its reputation,

curriculum and research. But their commitment to diversity and inclusion was also something that made me really happy."

As a first-year student, she has relished her supervised experiential learning, which has put her skills and knowledge to the test. But she's also appreciated the informal networking at RUSH. "You have a lot of opportunities to learn not only from your professors and the doctors you might encounter, but also from your peers," she says.

## Aiming to reduce health disparities

First-year student Eric Gonzalez (no relation to Victoria) decided to pursue a career in clinical nutrition to address the lack of resources available to Hispanic patients. "When I was younger, I was a little bit overweight," says the first-generation college student from Palatine, Ill. "The doctor said I was prone to diabetes or pre-diabetes, and that scared me. I knew I had to watch what I ate, but there wasn't anybody that I could really talk to about losing weight or just showing me how to eat healthy."

Since achieving a healthy weight on his own through diet and exercise, he plans to use his master's degree to help others find that balance — while addressing ongoing health disparities affecting Latinos.

**"At RUSH, we're leaders because we embrace change to ensure that our students have amazing opportunities while they're here."**

**Mark McInerney**, DHSc, RD, LDN, assistant professor and CNDI director

## Changing to expand opportunities for students

As of 2024, aspiring dietitians like Victoria and Eric need a master's degree to qualify for their registration examination. Students who enroll in either the full-time or part-time (and fully online) master's-level clinical nutrition program at RUSH will be well prepared for these national changes.

In addition, RUSH's clinical nutrition program is the only one in Chicago — and one of only three in the state — that accepts students without an undergraduate degree in nutrition dietetics. Applicants with any type of bachelor's degree may apply to RUSH if they have completed their prerequisites. By updating program requirements, RUSH aims to attract students from diverse backgrounds and

help diversify the profession, says Mark McInerney, DHSc, RD, LDN, assistant professor and clinical nutrition – dietetic integrated program director.

RUSH has also expanded its array of supervised experiential learning experiences so that students can explore the areas that interest them most: from sports nutrition to oncology to pediatrics to eating disorders. "In their last semester, we give students four weeks to practice in specialized areas that interest them, so we're able to tailor the learning experiences to students' actual interests," McInerney explains. "At RUSH, we're leaders because we embrace change to ensure that our students have amazing opportunities while they're here."



First-year clinical nutrition student Eric Gonzalez finds balance by walking his dog, Lola, or making ceviche or tamales with his family.



# Cardiovascular perfusion program empowers students to pursue leadership roles

The most successful cardiovascular perfusionists are highly organized, detail-oriented people who work well with others — just like Lorena Araujo. Last year, Araujo had a unique opportunity to demonstrate these skills — honed during her time at RUSH — as a student intern working alongside organizers of a national cardiothoracic conference in Florida.

Specifically, Araujo worked as part of the committee coordinating the Sanibel Symposium, a three-day event held in Florida. As part of her role, she helped set up rooms, check in attendees, introduce presenters and make sure the sessions flowed smoothly. She even sang karaoke

during a social reception to set the tone and ensure everyone was having a good time.

“As a student, I was very lucky to get that position,” Araujo says of the event, which draws hundreds of perfusion leaders from around the world. “I made so many connections, and it was an amazing experience so early in my perfusion career.”

Of the seven students selected as interns from perfusion schools across the country, four were RUSH students. Logan Hislope, Cris Parra and Maegan Harris from RUSH also served as student interns.



From left to right: RUSH perfusion students Megan Eaton, Michael Broadway, Paige Abdella, Luke Juricek, Nancy Torres and Engel Monsanto, and Julie Collins, CCP, LP, MS, cardiovascular perfusion program director, at work in the lab.



## Prepared to lead

Araujo, who is from Tampa and originally from Uruguay, says the perfusion program at RUSH helped her feel confident and prepared while working on the symposium. “The program teaches us organizational skills and teamwork, and that definitely helped me be part of this committee,” Araujo says. “During the symposium, the committee trusted me and knew that I would be organized and work as part of the team.”



Lorena Araujo, who graduated from RUSH this spring, used her leadership skills while helping organize a national cardiothoracic conference.

RUSH’s cardiovascular perfusion program curriculum includes an organizational leadership course, which students take during their second year. “Our organizational leadership class focuses on tools and strategies necessary to become an effective leader in organizations of any size,” says Julie Collins, MS, CCP, LP, cardiovascular perfusion program director.

Another second-year class on health care quality and operations management is designed to expose students to principles that foster continuous improvement and help organizations deliver higher quality care. “Quality control and quality assurance have become part of our jobs as perfusionists, and at the end of the course, students have a solid understanding of how to ensure that evidence-based medicine is being delivered,” Collins adds.

Simulation sessions in the lab also give students an opportunity to role-play different operating room scenarios, so they can feel prepared when real-life emergencies arise. In addition, students can build leadership skills by assisting faculty on collaborative projects, such as training respiratory therapy students and cardiovascular/pulmonary fellows on extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) systems, which perfusionists manage.

Students also can demonstrate their leadership by representing RUSH at events like the American Society of ExtraCorporeal Technology (AmSECT) Perfusion Bowl, a “Jeopardy!”-style game for students held at the AmSECT International Conference. In 2023, RUSH students earned second place.

Many RUSH perfusion students also present at national and local conferences, where they have an opportunity to build their communication and networking skills, Collins says.



RUSH perfusion students and faculty had a strong presence at the 2023 Sanibel Symposium.

## Making the right choice

Such leadership opportunities give students like Araujo an edge when they are ready to join the workforce. After Araujo graduates from RUSH this year, she hopes to work as a perfusionist in Chicago.

Before finding the perfusion program at RUSH, Araujo had not found a career path that spoke to her. While working as a certified nursing assistant on a cardiovascular ICU, she helped take care of post-operative heart patients. There, she learned about perfusion from one of the ECMO specialists. Intrigued, she started observing surgeries and learning more from the perfusion team, who encouraged her to apply to a few programs.

When she interviewed at RUSH, the attentive faculty made her feel comfortable right away. “I felt like, if they’re this

involved just in the interview process, I can only imagine how involved they are with the students who actually make it into the program,” she says.

Reflecting on her decision, Araujo is grateful for choosing perfusion and RUSH. “I feel lucky to have found my passion,” she says. “I could talk about perfusion for hours, and I would choose this program over and over and over again.”

**“Our organizational leadership class focuses on tools and strategies necessary to become an effective leader in organizations of any size.”**

**Julie Collins, MS, CCP, LP,**  
cardiovascular perfusion program director



From left to right: Engel Monsanto, Julie Collins, CCP, LP, MS, and Michael Broadway demonstrate how simulation sessions in the lab help build leadership skills.

## RUSH perfusion grad helps pediatric heart patients in Rwanda

People use words like “compassionate,” “caring” and “genuine” to describe RUSH perfusion graduate Anita Parker, MS. Parker has lent her talents as a volunteer to many causes, but most recently applied her training as a perfusionist to care for young patients in Rwanda.

This past winter, Parker completed a two-week mission trip to Kigali, Rwanda, with Novick Cardiac Alliance, an organization committed to helping children with heart disease in low- and middle-income countries. Working as part of the perfusion team, she assisted pediatric cardiac surgeries, thanks to a scholarship from Perfusion Without

Borders, in conjunction with the American Society of ExtraCorporeal Technology. The scholarship, offered to just one student across the country each year, covers travel and hotel expenses for students pursuing a medical mission.

“Before I knew I wanted to go into perfusion, I knew I was very keen on global public health,” says Parker, who lives in Boston. After reading “Mountains Beyond Mountains” about a physician’s work fighting tuberculosis in Peru, she searched for a career that would allow her to join medical missions and was drawn to perfusion. “I knew immediately that this was the career for me,” she says.



Before coming to RUSH, Parker worked at Boston Children's Hospital in several roles, including as a perfusion assistant for two years.

## Determination and focus

Parker's early childhood was tumultuous but helped form her commitment to aiding others. Parker and her older brother were born in Peru and cared for by a single mother after the death of their father in a motorcycle accident. As a toddler, she and her brother survived several kidnapping attempts by their paternal grandparents, who were involved in immoral activities to earn money. Aiming to give her children a better life, their birth mother put them up for adoption.

At two-and-a-half years old, Parker was adopted by a clinical nurse specialist in pediatric psychiatry who went on her own mission trips to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Her adoptive mother passed away in 2022, although Parker carries on her mother's commitment to combatting health disparities through medical missions. "My mother was so passionate about social justice and definitely raised me to have the same fire and passion that she carried," Parker says.



Anita Parker won a scholarship from Perfusion Without Borders, in conjunction with the American Society of ExtraCorporeal Technology, to assist perfusionists doing pediatric cardiac surgeries in Kigali, Rwanda.

## A history of helping others

Parker's recent trip to Rwanda was not her first medical mission. In 2014, she returned to the country where she was born, assisting free medical clinics in the Peruvian Amazon. At the end of that trip, she met a single mother whose partner had left her and was trying to reach relatives. Reminded of her own birth mother, Parker gave the woman her sandals, some clothes and a first aid kit. Two years later, Parker returned once more to Peru for another medical mission.

**"Sometimes, a leader can be the quiet person who's supporting everyone else and who recognizes everybody's inner strength and talents."**

**Anita Parker, MS, 2024 RUSH cardiovascular perfusion graduate**

Parker says the medical missions have taught her valuable leadership skills, such as being adaptable to different cultures, as well as the value of "quiet leadership."

"People assume the leader is the person who's at the front of the line calling out the shots," Parker says. "But sometimes, a leader can be the quiet person who's supporting everyone else and who recognizes everybody's inner strength and talents."

## MLS faculty, students embrace AI



Recognizing how artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to change allied health sciences in the future, medical laboratory science (MLS) faculty are training the next generation of lab leaders on using AI.

"AI can help you advance as a leader, but you have to be able to analyze it and critically think about it as a whole, which are skills you learn here at RUSH," says Nadine Lerret, PhD, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup>, associate professor and MLS program director.

### Streamlining tasks with AI

Lerret asks MLS students in her summer research course to experiment with AI tools like ChatGPT when writing grant proposals so they can learn the advantages and limitations of the technology firsthand.

"AI can take away the barriers if you are not a great writer, but it's not perfect," Lerret says. "The students learn that AI is not good at writing specific aims for a grant proposal or finding references. So, as a class, we can focus on building those skills without using any sort of AI."

### Using AI to improve job-seeking

Alex Hernandez, a second-year MLS student from Chicago, says learning how to use AI has been a benefit of her education at RUSH. "The opportunity to use AI

has enhanced my studies by creating an easier route to word things more professionally and to give me ideas I haven't thought of before," she says. "I take a long time on assignments and emails because I want to make sure I sound professional and use the right terminology in my field. Using AI makes it a little faster and easier to achieve."

With guidance from RUSH faculty, Hernandez also uses AI to help organize her thoughts when she is writing. Recently, she used AI to help polish up her resume. "I turned it into an AI generator so it could give me improvements — and it did," she says. "It reworded my descriptions on my past job employments, and now my resume is much more presentable."

### Readying the next generation of lab leaders

By helping MLS students like Hernandez understand the best use of AI, Lerret hopes to give them an edge in a rapidly changing health care landscape.

Lerret also models the use of AI for other faculty at RUSH. She routinely uses ChatGPT to help her create rubrics for scoring student assignments. In addition, she has modified some writing assignments to video format to ensure that students use AI as a learning tool, rather than a shortcut.

"There's definitely pros and cons to using AI in the classroom," Lerret says. "At RUSH, we're trying to approach it critically but also utilize it for the most benefit."

**"AI can help you advance as a leader, but you have to be able to analyze it and critically think about it as a whole, which are skills you learn here at RUSH."**

**Nadine Lerret, PhD, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup>, associate professor and MLS program director**



## Respiratory care grad to serve on Rosebud Indian Reservation through USPHS

Growing up with a mother who was an officer in the U.S. Navy helped Nicolé Cooper understand the value of leadership and service early on. When Cooper graduates from RUSH with her master's degree in respiratory care this spring, she will live those values as an officer in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS).

"You can do so much with a degree from RUSH," Cooper says. "It will let me advance my career a lot better than if I completed a bachelor's or associate's degree."

### A unique opportunity for emerging leaders

Cooper was accepted into the prestigious Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (SRCOSTEP), which is available to full-time students entering their final year of professional or graduate education.



After graduating with her master's degree from RUSH, Nicolé Cooper will become an officer with the USPHS and care for patients on a reservation in South Dakota.

Through the program, Cooper received a salary that covered her last year of tuition at RUSH. In return, she will give back two years of service as a respiratory therapist at a 32-bed hospital on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota after graduation. Before heading to South Dakota, she will complete two weeks of leadership training for officers.

**"I have so many opportunities to be exposed to leadership positions at RUSH. That is the biggest advantage RUSH has afforded me, especially when moving forward in my career."**

**Nicolé Cooper**, respiratory care grad and USPHS officer

She believes the leadership skills she has gained from her time at RUSH will help prepare her for her officer role. "I've had the opportunity to work with respiratory therapists who are critical thinkers, who have more autonomy, who take the initiative to do what's right and who show me how to advocate for the patient," Cooper says.

### Building leadership acumen

RUSH offers one of the few graduate-level respiratory care programs in the United States, providing students like Cooper with unmatched opportunities to get a head start as respiratory care leaders.

"Our program gives students skills they can transfer to any kind of work environment, from an academic environment here at RUSH to a more rural area like a reservation," says J. Brady Scott, PhD, RRT-ACCS, AE-C, FAARC, FCCP, associate professor and respiratory care program director. "Our job is to prepare them for wherever they decide to go and live their own dreams."

Cooper, who grew up in Jamaica and came to the U.S. when she was eight years old, appreciates the interaction she has had with different types of respiratory care leaders at RUSH. "Whether I want to be a manager, teacher or researcher, I have so many opportunities to be exposed to leadership positions at RUSH," she says. "That is the biggest advantage RUSH has afforded me, especially when moving forward in my career."



Cooper (right) with her mom in Dubai.

## PhD program cultivates leaders across the allied health fields

For students who want a seat at the table — especially in academia or research — having a PhD can help them advance their career and meet their personal goals.

"Many of our PhD students are already leaders or are on the cusp of becoming great leaders in their own professions," says Paula Jo Belice, PhD, OTR/L, assistant professor, Department of Health Sciences. "Our program gives them that added push to develop as leaders, often by challenging their assumptions. Our curriculum is designed to help students examine their beliefs and explore other perspectives."

### Flexibility and camaraderie

Students value the flexibility of RUSH's fully online PhD in Health Sciences program but still benefit from collaborative activities, assignments and discussions with other students working in a variety of allied health disciplines across the country.

They also improve their leadership competencies, in part by providing encouragement to their fellow classmates. "Our PhD students support and motivate each other because nobody understands what it takes to go through a PhD program except another PhD student," Belice says.

### Personal and professional advancement

The intellectual and personal growth that students experience while pursuing their doctorate can be profound. "You don't go into our PhD program and come out the same person," Belice says.

For example, working on their dissertation is often transformative for students. "Our PhD students develop as leaders by fostering innovation and contributing research to their field," Belice adds.

Many leaders who graduate from the program not only achieve their own ambitions but also make it their mission to help the health care industry address ongoing issues like quality and equity. "Health care requires strong, skilled leaders right now to navigate the challenges that existed before and after the pandemic," Belice says. "Leaders must have a vision that guides people toward solutions."



Paula Jo Belice, PhD, OTR/L, assistant professor, Department of Health Sciences, believes that earning a PhD in Health Sciences from RUSH can be transformative for students.

**"Our PhD students develop as leaders by fostering innovation and contributing research to their field."**

**Paula Jo Belice**, PhD, OTR/L, assistant professor, Department of Health Sciences



# Laboratory managers are grateful for CLM program's focus on leadership

While working on the bench, Melody Boudreaux Nelson, DCLS, MS, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup> realized that if she wanted to set herself apart when leadership positions in the laboratory became available, she needed to be proactive and fill her knowledge gaps. To take the next step in her career, she enrolled in RUSH's online Master of Science degree in Clinical Laboratory Management (CLM) program.

"Education is the best way to dive into material and expand your knowledge base because it's a safe space," Nelson says.

After receiving her master's degree from RUSH in 2019, Nelson landed her first role as an operational manager supervising 45 staff at a Kansas hospital. One of her first responsibilities was reviewing a proposal for laboratory services at a new medical office building. "I was able to look at it critically and understand it, which was a big win — and that came from my education," she says.



Melody Boudreaux Nelson, DCLS, MS, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup> parlayed her master's degree from RUSH into a doctorate in clinical laboratory science.

In 2023, Nelson earned her doctorate in clinical laboratory science. Today, she is the principal clinical laboratory scientist at the University of Kansas Health System, where she collaborates with multidisciplinary teams to implement best practices and quality improvement initiatives.

Nelson credits RUSH's CLM program with giving her the ability to see how decisions in the laboratory affect other departments. "It really helped me develop a process for how I handle new situations and opportunities," she says.

## A deep dive into scientific writing and ethics

Matt Hukill, MBS, MS, MLS, SBB, a reference technologist for the American Red Cross in Durham, N.C., recommends RUSH's CLM program to aspiring laboratory leaders for the knowledge it provides as well as the networking opportunities.



Matt Hukill, MBS, MS, MLS, SBB, routinely uses the scientific writing skills he learned from RUSH to write SOPs.

"The program is 1,000 percent worth it, especially if you're looking to go into management or a leadership role of any kind," says Hukill, who earned his master's degree in 2022 and supervised seven staff at a different company. He says the program prepared him for situations, such as hiring and promoting staff, that he never would have encountered as a regular bench technologist. When navigating issues with personnel, he often applies what he learned from his ethics course at RUSH.

Another valuable course for Hukill was on scientific writing, which helped him hone his ability to develop and update standard operating procedures. In addition, his solid writing skills allow him to earn extra income creating continuing education courses for another company.

## From budgeting to managing

Thompson Akinbolaji, MS, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup> SBB<sup>CM</sup>, a lead reference laboratory technologist at the American Red Cross Immunohematology Reference Lab in Douglasville, Ga., chose RUSH because it offers both the Specialist in Blood Bank Technology and the Master of Science in Clinical Laboratory Management online programs.

During his CLM studies, he especially valued courses on budget preparation, test methodology/equipment validation, compliance and managing employees. "The RUSH CLM program has all it takes to equip and prepare you for the laboratory leadership role, starting from



Thompson Akinbolaji, MS, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup> SBB<sup>CM</sup>, says faculty for the Master's in Clinical Laboratory Management program at RUSH were always available to help.

supervisor to manager and director," says Akinbolaji, who earned his master's degree in 2023 and now oversees six staff.

**"The regulatory aspects of the laboratory are increasingly complex, and we need leaders who can understand them, so the laboratory is run efficiently, economically and ethically."**

**Maribeth Flaws, PhD, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup> SM, SI,** chairperson of the Department of Medical Laboratory Science and CLM program director

## Complexity demands leadership

"The regulatory aspects of the laboratory are increasingly complex, and we need leaders who can understand them, so the laboratory is run efficiently, economically and ethically," says Maribeth Flaws, PhD, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup> SM, SI, chairperson of the Department of Medical Laboratory Science and CLM program director.

RUSH faculty continually update the CLM curriculum to reflect evolving industry guidelines and trends. "Our faculty are experienced medical laboratory scientists who bring their real-life work experience to the classroom," Flaws says. "This helps us ensure that what our students learn is relevant to their jobs from day one of the program."





Social workers like Maleek Ratliff, MSW, LSW, (left) provide a wide range of mental health services to patients at RUSH.

# Social workers at RUSH address mental health from all angles

Whether they're helping psychosocially vulnerable patients on Chicago's West Side address complex social and medical needs or helping faculty, staff and students manage stress, social workers at RUSH are on the front lines of the mental health crisis.

"We're committed to improving access to resources to reduce disparities in mental health outcomes across different groups, and at RUSH, our social workers are leading the charge on pathways toward that goal," says Rebecca Lahey, MSW, LCSW, director of integrated mental health and wellness with the Department of Social Work and Community Health.

## Addressing the community's needs

To improve access to mental health resources for patients on Chicago's West Side and surrounding communities, RUSH has established an outpatient psychotherapy clinic staffed by 15 licensed social workers. Half of the clinic's patients self-identify as Black, while one-quarter identify as Latinx. The team provides trauma-informed individual and group psychotherapy in both English and Spanish, utilizing approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), psychodynamic psychotherapy, dialectical

behavior therapy (DBT), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy (EMDR), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), in addition to relational and mindfulness-based approaches. They collaborate with other providers on developing comprehensive, patient-centered care plans. "We leverage evidence-based interventions and try to work with each person where they are," Lahey says.

Advocacy for under-resourced patient populations is also a focus. "Social workers have a lens for social justice as well as a lens for seeing a person in the context of their environment," Lahey adds.

Creating more diversity in the profession to serve under-represented populations is also a priority. In 2022, RUSH founded the Legacy Mental Health Fellowship to support emerging minority social work clinicians. The fellowship is a collaboration between the Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, RUSH's Department of Social Work and Community Health, and Chicago State University's MSW program. It is generously funded by Rachel Kohler and Mark Hoplamazian, the ITW Foundation and the Hemmelstein Endowment for Health Equity.

## Easing stress, supporting training

Beyond serving those in the community, social workers also partner with the Center for Clinical Wellness to provide free mental health services to all RUSH staff, faculty and students. Five full-time social workers provide psychotherapy in-person and via telehealth. In addition, social workers are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help any RUSH employee or student who may need immediate support.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, RUSH social workers also stepped up to provide counseling for frontline health care workers, security personnel, housekeeping staff and others dealing with stress.

In addition, several social work faculty are engaged in interprofessional education initiatives for RUSH University students. For example, social workers at RUSH have developed curricula to help students from multiple

disciplines understand how they can collaborate to provide better care for older adults, including those with mental health issues.

The breadth of mental health services and training provided by social workers at RUSH demonstrates the profession's versatility, Lahey explains. "Not only can social workers provide these services, but we're often taking the lead to support our patients," she says.

**"We're committed to improving access to resources to reduce disparities in mental health outcomes across different groups, and at RUSH, our social workers are leading the charge on pathways toward that goal."**

**Rebecca Lahey**, MSW, LCSW, director of integrated mental health and wellness with the Department of Social Work and Community Health



# New acting chairperson shares his optimistic outlook for AuD and SLP grads

If you ask Valeriy Shafiro, PhD, what brought him to RUSH 20 years ago, he will tell you it was serendipity. Since then, he has been leading others through his teaching, research and service at RUSH.

In this interview, Shafiro, who is now acting chairperson of the Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences, shares his views on teaching and leadership and explains why he believes the audiology (AuD, No. 9) and speech-language pathology (SLP, No. 29) programs at RUSH are ranked among the top 30 programs in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*.

## Q: What drew you to RUSH 20 years ago?

I was finishing my PhD training, and as I started looking into RUSH, I thought this place was an interesting match with my background. Initially, I had clinical training in nursing back in the Soviet Union, and then when I came to the U.S., I studied psychology and cognitive sciences, and then speech and hearing. As I started answering clinical

questions in my research, I thought RUSH was the right place to be.

## Q: You recently volunteered in Poland with a team that provided hearing aids for Ukrainian war refugees with hearing loss. What was that experience like?

I was very happy to go and help. Unfortunately, I think there will be a great need for audiology services in the next five, 10 or 15 years. In addition to a growing number of older adults who experience difficulty hearing, similar to the U.S. and other Western countries, many people in Ukraine are also being exposed to a lot of noise from guns and explosions, and the war is not over.

I do hope to be part of future volunteer efforts. In the meantime, we've been collecting donations and medical supplies to send to the front lines. My family is from Odesa, and we still have friends and relatives there and in other parts of Ukraine. We try to help them as much as we can.

## Q: How would you describe your teaching philosophy?

It is more of an approach to teaching rather than a grand philosophy. I believe in focusing on specific practical problems and finding ways to do things better, such as through technology. On the other hand, it is ultimately the fundamental knowledge accumulated over time that provides a framework for developing new approaches. The best learning happens in transition, while going back and forth between concrete cases and general principles. Essentially this is the teacher-practitioner model that we have here at RUSH.

There's also an intrinsic reward that is associated with learning. As educators, we must share that pleasure of learning with our students. And to be a good teacher, you must be a good learner.

## Q: What is your approach to leadership?

The high marks we receive for our audiology and speech pathology programs are the result of our strong faculty and students. As a leader, I aim to create the conditions that will help the faculty and students thrive.

## Q: What are your goals for the department?

Our strategic goals have been well-articulated by the faculty and are quite ambitious. One is to expand our outreach efforts through our SCOPE (Student Community Outreach Program of Excellence) clinic, which gives audiology and speech pathology students a unique way to learn clinical skills under faculty supervision while providing free care to uninsured or underinsured patients. It aligns well with the RUSH mission, and here in Chicago, there are many people who cannot effectively address their health care needs due to multiple barriers to care.

We are expanding services to underserved populations around RUSH, while making that part of our teaching practices and clinical training. Being in a diverse place like Chicago is both exciting and a blessing, but at the same time it brings challenges because we must be aware of different cultural practices to find the best ways faculty and students can serve our patients.

As acting chairperson, I would also like to expand our faculty and student research. If students are involved in research earlier, they will be more sophisticated consumers of research in their fields and will make better choices as clinicians.

## Q: What are some of the greatest challenges and opportunities you see facing audiology and speech-language pathology today?

Students who choose careers in audiology or speech pathology can be confident that they have chosen a great career path. Both audiology and speech pathology are considered among the top 20 best health care jobs for 2024, according to *U.S. News & World Report*. The Bureau of Labor Statistics also projects significant growth in both jobs, in part because of the aging population.

But both fields face challenges because their scope of practice is so broad. Audiologists and speech pathologists can work in hospitals, educational settings, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes and private practice. These all require somewhat different sets of skills, and education needs to prepare students for that.

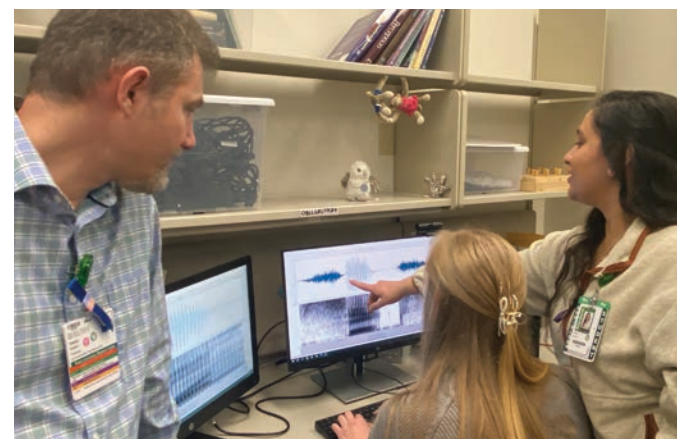
At the same time, there are also big changes in technology taking place, as well as legislative changes. At RUSH, we embrace the opportunity to prepare students for a changing environment and give them the fundamental knowledge they need to be successful. We also encourage students to be involved in advocacy and service through our professional associations, so they can take ownership of these issues and become leaders in their field.

**“The high marks we receive for our audiology and speech pathology programs are the result of our strong faculty and students. As a leader, I aim to create the conditions that will help the faculty and students thrive.”**

**Valeriy Shafiro, PhD, acting chairperson, Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences**



From left to right: AuD students Anna Aupperlee, Nicole Polansky (standing), Nisha Dhanik and Emma Marks, and Valeriy Shafiro, PhD, acting chairperson, Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences.



From left to right: Valeriy Shafiro, PhD, acting chairperson, Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences, with AuD students Anna Aupperlee and Nisha Dhanik.





## Remembering Dr. Emily Wang

Emily Wang, PhD, CCC-SLP, professor emerita in the Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences, died on March 13, 2024. Prior to her retirement in 2023, Dr. Wang worked at RUSH for 29 years and was a close colleague and a dear friend to many in the RUSH community. As academic faculty, she trained generations of speech-language pathologists, and as a highly sought-after clinician, she provided superb clinical care to countless patients in Chicago, the United States and around the world. Her sudden death is deeply mourned by all those whose lives she had touched. Dr. Wang is survived by her husband and son.

Dr. Wang joined RUSH in 1995 shortly after completing her doctoral training at Haskins Laboratories of Yale University and the University of Connecticut. With a primary focus on adult neurogenic motor speech disorders, she taught 15 different courses in the master's program in speech-language pathology. For her excellent teaching, she was selected to be a graduation hoodler seven times by her students.

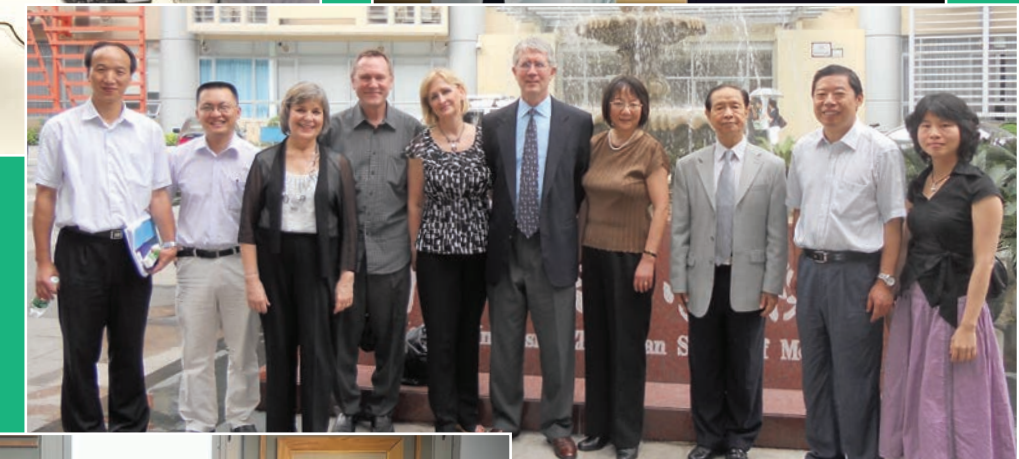
In addition to her home Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences, Dr. Wang worked closely with colleagues in the Department of Otorhinolaryngology, and especially in the Movement Disorders Section of the Department of Neurological Sciences. Her research on speech and swallowing disorders in Parkinson's disease was highly recognized nationally and internationally, and was funded by the National Institutes of Health

and the Michael J. Fox Foundation. Prior to her death, she had been serving as the co-director of the Pan American section of the Train-the-Trainer program of the International Parkinson and Movement Disorder Society.

From 2017 through 2023, Dr. Wang served as the chairperson of the Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences, comprised of two graduate programs: Doctor of Audiology and Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology. Dr. Wang also oversaw a successful national reaccreditation of both programs by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association in 2022.

An exemplary teacher-practitioner with a passion and dedication for serving others, Dr. Wang had conceptualized, founded and successfully developed the SCOPE Speech and Hearing Clinic at RUSH for patients with significant barriers to accessing medical care. This pro bono clinic, which opened in May 2022, combines three components central to RUSH's overall mission: clinical training of graduate students, community outreach and service, and clinical research. Today, the SCOPE Clinic symbolizes a growing legacy to Dr. Wang's vision of service, clinical excellence, intellectual achievement and dedication to improving the lives of others.

*Donations in her memory that support the SCOPE Speech and Hearing Clinic can be made through <https://rushgiving.com/scope>.*





**RUSH University College of Health Sciences  
is cultivating experts in**

**Audiology**  
**Blood Bank Technology**  
**Cardiovascular Perfusion**  
**Clinical Laboratory Management**  
**Clinical Nutrition**  
**Health Sciences**  
**Health Systems Management**  
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**Respiratory Care**  
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