The members of the James K. Tolton Student Society from the Classes of 2019 and 2020 have been active, promoting service, advocacy, diversity, and leadership among their classmates.

GW PA students have participated in numerous public service activities and projects focused on health promotion and education. In support of men’s health, students competed in the ZERO Prostate Cancer 5K, raising awareness about prostate cancer and the need for new treatments. Our students continue to serve as volunteer providers at the Healing Clinic, a volunteer clinic operated by GW’s medical, physician assistant, and public health students that provides health care to vulnerable residents of the Washington, D.C., area. Students also used their clinical skills to volunteer with members of the Virginia Academy of Physician Assistants in the medical tent at the D.C. Cherry Blossom Festival Run.

PA students continue to be involved with several activities that align with the program’s mission to recruit and train a diverse healthcare workforce committed to health equity and quality care for all. Students work with the GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences’ Office of Diversity and Inclusion to promote the D.C. Health and Academic Prep Program (DC HAPP), a program that seeks to identify, recruit, and nurture talented Washington, D.C., public school students from backgrounds underrepresented in medicine with an interest in pursuing careers in the health professions. The overwhelming response of applicants for DC HAPP prompted our students to organize a one-day event, the D.C. Healthcare Exploration for Aspiring Leaders (DC HEAL), where participants took part in educational sessions and hands-on healthcare activities. Students were pleased with the response and are looking forward to continuing DC HEAL and other programs to increase diversity within the PA profession.

Leading up to PA Week, students participated in activities aligned with their commitment to address food insecurity. They volunteered at the Capital Area Food Bank, donated money from bake sales to benefit Miriam’s Kitchen, and used their “green thumb” at the GW GroW Community Garden. The week ended with a group of students, alumni, faculty, and preceptors joining together for a reception celebrating the PA profession.

> continued student updates news on page 3
Lisa Chuong (‘19) was named the 2018 recipient of the Terrence E. Barr Memorial Scholarship at the annual PA Week Alumni Reception held in October 2018. The GW PA faculty selected Chuong for her leadership, service, and advocacy of the PA profession. The award is named for Terrence E. Barr, a GW clinical preceptor who died in 2003.

Chuong, a 2017 and 2018 recipient of the Patricia M. Creevy Scholarship, has demonstrated her commitment to the PA profession through service-oriented learning as well as taking the lead on multiple projects during her tenure in the PA program. She was active in the James K. Tolton Student Society, serving as historian and working on multiple committees. She also worked with the Camden Coalition GW Student Hotspotting Team, an interdisciplinary team with the goal of pairing patients with social services to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions. Chuong’s work with the team resulted in a poster presentation at the 2018 GW Community Health Symposium entitled, “Student Hotspotting: Lessons from interprofessional management of high utilization patients in the community.”

“ The Barr scholarship is given to a student who is identified by the faculty for sharing the core values of the program.”

Barr started his healthcare career as a Navy corpsman in 1966 when he was assigned to a U.S. Marine Corps Battalion in Vietnam. His ability to provide compassionate medical care in the most trying of circumstances is what later inspired his partner, John Colletta, to honor his service with a GW PA scholarship. After serving in the Marine Corps, Barr enrolled at the University of Florida to become a PA. He later became a devoted preceptor for the GW PA Program.

The Barr scholarship is given to a student who is identified by the faculty for sharing the core values of the program. The award is presented annually by Colletta, Barr’s partner of nine years.
As the fall 2018 semester came to a close, the students planned a week of holiday-themed activities to keep class morale high, including an alumni panel “Lunch and Learn”, ugly holiday sweater day, and a potluck lunch for students and faculty. In conjunction with GW’s Interdisciplinary Student Community-Oriented Prevention Enhancement Service (IS COPES), students held a winter clothing drive. During the holiday season, student volunteers placed remembrance wreaths on the graves at Arlington National Cemetery, paying tribute to men and women who have served our country, and honoring the military service of their fellow classmates.

The GW PA Program also took part in the National Medical Challenge Bowl, held during the 2019 AAPA conference in Denver. Faculty, alumni, and fellow PA students cheered the team, the Toxic Megacolonials, who represented GW with pride.

The PA Week Alumni Reception brought together alumni, faculty, and students. Clockwise from top left: Patrisha C. Creevy (’79) PA-C, (right) who established a scholarship fund for a PA student demonstrating exceptional merit and service. Creevy is pictured with her husband, Al Del Negro, MD, and Lisa Chuong (’19) PA-C, a two-time recipient of the Creevy scholarship; the Dr. Jules Cahan Distinguished Teaching Award was presented to Mary Ogunsanya, MD, FAAP, (L), pictured with Program Director Karen Wright, PhD, PA-C. The Distinguished Public Service Awardee was James F. Cawley, PA-C, MPH, DHL (Hon) (L), pictured with Department Chair Maura Polansky, MS, MHPE, PA-C; Paul Kinkead (’20) and guest. Lynn R. Goldman, MD, MS, MPH, dean of the Milken Institute School of Public Health, and Patrick Sanders, executive director of development and alumni relations for Milken. Center image: Joyce Caldwell Panagides (’82, MPH ’89) and Deborah Bombard (’82).

New Pre-PA Program Track Started

The Department of PA Studies is proud to announce a new track in the Post-baccalaureate Pre-medicine program. This pre-PA track will allow individuals with an undergraduate degree to take all or most of the prerequisite courses to participate in the application process for a physician assistant program. In addition to core science programs, the new track will expose students to research and shadowing/volunteer opportunities that are often helpful in the admissions process. Students will also take a “Special Topics in Healthcare” course during the fall and spring semester where they will study topics such as healthcare delivery, health policy, and other professional practice topics. This 12-month, 37-credit certificate program will start each year in May and will be offered at the GW Virginia Science and Technology Campus in Ashburn, Va. Applications will be accepted through March 15, although applicants are encouraged to apply early.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Michelle Miller (Class of 2011)

There aren’t many PAs like Lt. Cmdr. Michelle Miller, PA-C, DMSc, EMPA. In fact, there aren’t many fictional characters like her. The George Washington University PA alumnus has amassed a list of achievements fit for a Hollywood movie script, but her leadership, service, and sense of duty is nothing short of authentic.

Miller began her military career serving in the U.S. Coast Guard. She left the Coast Guard to enroll in GW’s PA program in 2009 and found that its location in the nation’s capital complemented her background and future career goals.

“Being in DC and being a new veteran, it definitely allowed a lot of opportunities that I would not have had elsewhere,” Miller said.

After graduating from GW in 2011, she returned to military service, this time as an officer in the U.S. Navy. Her first post brought a change of scenery by taking her to Guam, where she practiced primary care and emergency medicine. The high acuity environment sparked an interest in emergency medicine, but her next assignment would take her role and responsibilities to an entirely different depth.

In 2013, Miller was assigned to the U.S.S. John C. Stennis, a nuclear-powered Nimitz-class aircraft carrier that served in the Pacific Ocean and deployed to conflicts in the Middle East. Aboard the massive ship, though, Miller was responsible for operations that went far beyond medical care. As the underway officer on deck, Miller oversaw the launch of aircraft, boats, and helicopters from the carrier.

“You’re a military officer first and a medical specialist second,” Miller said. “It’s a tightrope you have to walk.”

After serving on the U.S.S. John C. Stennis, Miller pursued additional training by enrolling in the Navy’s Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant Fellowship in San Diego. In 2017, she became one of a select group of PAs to complete the rigorous 18-month training program. That same year, she began practicing emergency medicine at the U.S. Navy Medical Center in Portsmouth, Va., where she also served as director of the hospital’s fast track unit.

But Miller’s time in the emergency department didn’t stop her from taking on additional duties and leadership roles. She served as the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) and is currently the administrative officer of the Navy Medicine East Transgender Care Team, where she oversees the medical care of about half of all transgender sailors in the Navy. In addition, Miller has deployed to provide medical care in austere environments and was part of one of the first Navy units to deploy on a foreign military vessel.

These efforts—and countless other contributions to the Navy—have not gone unnoticed. In 2018, Michelle Miller was named the “Navy PA of the Year.”

The next phase of Michelle Miller’s life—wherever it takes her—will likely bring the same impressive combination of accomplishment and service that has become the hallmark of her career. For those hoping to follow in her footsteps, she has some advice:

“Keep an open mind,” she said. “And no matter what job you have, do it well.”
Over the course of four days last fall, 29 alumni returned to campus to help with admissions interviews. The alums, representing cohorts from 1977 to 2018, conducted interviews or participated in an alumni panel (see list below). About 240 applicants visited campus to interview for admission into the program, so alumni assistance was critical.

The interviewees were chosen from a pool of more than 1,900 applicants. During the interview sessions, applicants learned about our programs, met faculty, participated in multiple mini-interviews, attended didactic and clinical year student and alumni panels, provided a writing sample, and toured campus. Applicants said they enjoyed hearing about the various work experiences of our alumni. We really could not pull off the admissions interviews without the joint efforts of our volunteer students, alumni, faculty, and staff, so thank you to all involved!

As a result of the interview and application process, we admitted 67 students into the program. Classes for the 2021 cohort began on June 3.

> If you are interested in serving as an interviewer or panelist for fall 2019 admissions interviews, please contact Allison Hardy at allisonhardy@gwu.edu. We welcome your support!

**Past Volunteers**

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<tr>
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<td>Stephanie Aguilar ’18</td>
<td>Alisha Atherly ’18</td>
<td>Olayinka Akinola-Hadley ’07*</td>
<td>Olayinka Akinola-Hadley ’07</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Christine Boyer ’14</td>
<td>Brittany Christopher ’17</td>
<td>Aliissa Bishop ’18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meghan Elden ’18</td>
<td>Eleanor Frye ’18</td>
<td>Aziza Hull ’11</td>
<td>Bonnie Leksrisawat ’15</td>
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<td>Francis Kelleher ’77</td>
<td>Elizabeth Kiananthra ’89</td>
<td>Emily Liten ’08</td>
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<td>Tim Lentz ’78</td>
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<td>Jared Ng ’15</td>
<td>Kristen Schnurman ’13</td>
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<td>Amber Sisenstein ’13</td>
<td>Caroline Roza ’13</td>
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<tr>
<td>James O’Hara ’16</td>
<td>Corrine Russo ’17*</td>
<td>Amber Sisenstein ’17</td>
<td>Julian Larrea Saavedra ’18</td>
</tr>
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*Volunteered more than once.
The Class of 2021 celebrated the start of their PA training by participating in the annual Convocation & White Coat Ceremony on Friday, June 28. The event was emceed by Karen Wright, PhD, PA-C, director of the PA Program, assistant professor, and assistant dean for Student Life and Academic Support. Captain Robin Hunter-Buskey of the U.S. Public Health Service took part in the ceremony, providing remarks that reflected on her experiences as a PA. The Class of 2021 also heard from the co-presidents of the Class of 2020 who shared some of their first- and second-year experiences. Sixty-six students received their white coats after hearing about its significance from Professor Susan LeLacheur, DrPH, PA-C. The ceremony ended with Debra Herrmann, DHSc, MPH, PA-C, co-director of clinical education and assistant professor, leading the students and faculty in reciting the Physician Assistant Student Pledge.

**CLASS OF 2020**

Clockwise from top: The Class of 2020 in their short white coats. Keynote speaker Dave Keahey, PA-C, MSPH, delivering remarks on his experience as a PA. Students reciting the Physician Assistant Student Pledge. Shannen Renehan, Class of 19 Tolton Society co-president, speaks about her experiences as a student.
Class of 2020 and 2021
Short White Coat Ceremonies

Clockwise from top left: Class of 2021 students are assisted into their short white coats by the Class of 2020. Robin Hunter Buskey, DHSc, CPHQ, PA-C, delivered the keynote address. Students reciting the Physician Assistant Student Pledge. The Class of 2021 in their short white coats.
Classes of 2018 and 2019 Receive Long White Coats

May is the month for celebrations at the GW PA Program. And on May 18, 2018, the Class of 2018 donned their long white coats for the White Coat Ceremony at GW’s Dorothy Betts Marvin Theatre.

For the first time in PA Program history, the long white coats worn by members of the Class of 2018 and Class of 2019 were donated by generous GW alumni who contributed to the PA White Coat Initiative fund.

Highlights of the White Coat Ceremony included Christopher Vaudo delivering a comedic and insightful student reflection after receiving the GW PA Outstanding Student Award. Alumnus David Glasser, PA-C, FAAPA, attended the event and shared his wisdom on his rewarding career. Twelve students were inducted into the Alpha Eta Honor Society: Anna Claire Alldredge-Brown, Katlyn Arndt, Phillip Bankston, Alyce Brookfield, Michelle Ciesla, Helen Jorski, Bailey Limyansky, Taylor McDowell, Angela Stevens, Cari Timko, Christopher Vaudo, and Danielle Winn.

The Class of 2019 celebrated the White Coat Ceremony on Friday, May 17, 2019. Adam Hartheimer offered an insightful and inspiring student reflection while Tori Eskay and Leann Kuehn received the GW PA Outstanding Student Award. The Class of 2019 selected Tamara Ritsema, PhD, MPH, PA-C, assistant professor, as keynote speaker for the event. Ritsema charged the students to give back to the many people who had supported them in their journey to becoming PAs and also shared her own motivational story of service to others and the PA profession. Alpha Eta inductees included: Bonnie Alexander, Nicole Certner, Paige Cuscovitch, Tori Eskay, Danica Fascella, Emily Garvey, Molly Harrigan, James Hughes, Mary Mullins, Shannen Renehan, Katie Smiley, and Christopher Wagnitz.

Congratulations to all of our recent graduates! Class of 2018 images (left) Top: Alissia Bishop proudly pointing out the “PA-C” embroidered on her long white coat. Bottom: The Class of 2018 in their long white coats. Class of 2019 images (right) Top: The Class of 2019 in their long white coats. Bottom: Lauren Artinger, Lainey Bustos, and Connor Butz strike a pose after the ceremony.
Alumni Reception
Seventy-five alumni representing various classes—including the program’s first class—along with 10 current students attended the GW alumni reception. Alumni enjoyed light food and drinks while they reconnected with classmates, caught up with faculty members, and met current students. Students also made connections with alumni who practice in various specialties around the country. Karen Wright, PhD, PA-C, director of the PA Program, assistant professor, and assistant dean for Student Life and Academic Support, shared news of the program, including acknowledgement of James Cawley’s retirement as a faculty member. Cawley, MPH, PA-C, is now professor emeritus at GW’s Milken Institute School of Public Health and a professor of PA practice at Florida State University College of Medicine. Wright encouraged alumni to serve as clinical preceptors for students.

Student Challenge Bowl
PA students and alumni supporters from across the country came together for the Medical Challenge Bowl. More than 100 teams of students took part in the first elimination round, using audience response clickers to answer a series of questions. Then 36 teams made it to the onstage rounds, including GW’s team of Allison Boyd, Tara Trenhaile, and Andrew Bathe. They were cheered on by a lively group of GW students, faculty, and alumni shaking GW pom poms. GW’s team fared well, but ultimately, Penn State won the competition.

CME Presentations and Workshops
GW faculty and staff gave several presentations at the conference:
- Tami Ritsema, PhD, MPH, PA-C/R, assistant professor, presented, “British PAs in 2019: Results of the Annual Census.”
- Ryan Strauss, MPH, PA-C, adjunct assistant professor, led several emergency medicine skills workshops.
- Reamer Bushardt, PharmD, PA-C, DFAAPA, senior associate dean of Health Sciences and professor; Harrison Reed, MMSc, PA-C, assistant professor; and Teri Capshaw, MBA, Health Sciences communications and editorial director, co-presented, “Peer Reviewing Manuscripts,” and “The Art of Medical Writing: Roadmap to Publication.” Bushardt is editor in chief of JAAPA, Reed is associate editor, and Capshaw is special topics editor with the journal.
- Reamer Bushardt also presented posters, “Demographics and career interest of students in a novel high school STEM academy designed to increase diversity in the health professions,” co-authored with GW colleagues and “Analysis of Unsuccessful Original Research Submissions to JAAPA,” co-authored with Harrison Reed, and Rick Dehn, MPA, PA-C, DFAAPA, research editor with JAAPA.

- Harrison Reed presented: “Undifferentiated Shock” and “Do Physician Assistant State License Applications Create a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment?” (also presented as a poster)

Leadership
Several GW students and faculty participated in the policy-making bodies of SAAAPA (the Student Academy) and AAPA:
- Carly Moss (’19) – represented GW students at the Assembly of Representative for SAAAPA
- Kirsten Schoenike (’19) – represented students of the SAAAPA at the House of Delegates at the AAPA
- Sean Robinson – represented the Virginia Academy of PAs at the House of Delegates at the AAPA
- Lisa Alexander, EdD, MPH, PA-C, and Howard Straker, EdD, MPH, PA-C, – represented the PA Education Association as observers at House of Delegates at the AAPA. Alexander is professor and Straker is director of the PA/MPH Program, assistant professor, and assistant professor of Prevention and Community Health at GW’s Milken Institute School of Public Health.

GW’s commencement weekend coincided with the start of the AAPA 2019 conference. Throughout the weekend, PA faculty and students boarded planes to Denver, Colorado to place GW’s stamp on conference. Here are some of the GW highlights of the conference:

GW at the AAPA Conference
GW PA students and faculty at the Challenge Bowl.

The Alumni Reception reunited Lisa Alexander (’79, ’03), EdD, MPH, PA-C, and Wendy Cohlan Fennelly (’85) PA-C.

GW PA looks forward to continuing its strong participation at the 2020 conference in Nashville.
Lisa Alexander, EdD, MPH, PA-C, professor, will complete her term as president of the Physician Assistant Education Association at the end of 2019. During her tenure, PAEA unveiled a new online learning portal designed to support PA educators around the country whether or not they are able to come to PAEA events.

Erika Bramlette, MBA, PA-C, is assuming more responsibility at GW. Not only does she serve on the School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS) Executive Committee, but she also was recently named the Health Sciences liaison to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) at SMHS. In this role, she is helping implement the strategic plan of the ODI.

James Cawley, MPH, PA-C, retired after more than 40 years of service to GW’s PA Program and the Milken Institute School of Public Health. He is enjoying spending time with his grandchildren, playing golf, and serving in a new role as professor of PA practice at the Florida State University College of Medicine.

Bart Gillum, DSc, MHS, PA-C, director of the Post-Baccalaureate Pre-medicine Program and visiting assistant professor, is looking forward to implementing the pre-PA track within the post-bacc program.

DeeDee Herrmann, DHSc, MPH, PA-C, co-director of clinical education and assistant professor, has been busy teaching as a member of the Center for Faculty Excellence at SMHS. She has been leading medical education workshops in the GW departments of Surgery and Orthopedics. In addition, she led a teaching workshop for all the residency directors at GW as well as for the PA/NP group.

Susan LeLacheur, DrPH, PA-C, was promoted to full professor in June 2019 in recognition for her excellence in teaching, research, and service to GW. The appointment also recognizes her devotion to students and the program over the years. She says she is delighted to never have to apply for promotion again!

Nicole Mortier, MHS, PA-C, assistant professor, was appointed to the editorial advisory board for the Journal of Physician Assistant Education in the spring of 2019. She continues her work on a doctor of philosophy degree in maternal and child health epidemiology.

Maura Polansky, MS, MHPE, PA-C, chair of the Department of PA Studies and assistant professor, reports that she’s enjoying working on strategic planning for the department and supporting the new pre-PA track in the post-baccalaureate program. In addition to those duties and teaching, she is researching the impact of PAs on physician education.

Harrison Reed, MMSc, PA-C, assistant professor, reports that he enjoys mentoring PAs in their scholarly writing. Reed serves as associate editor of JAAPA.

Tami Ritsema, PhD, MPH, PA-C/R, assistant professor, completed her PhD in health workforce research in March 2019. She is serving as the editor-in-chief of the textbook “Ballweg’s Physician Assistant: a guide to clinical practice” 7th edition.

Sean Robinson, DHSc, MS, PA-C, director of academic curriculum and assistant professor, served as a member of the Virginia delegation to the AAPA House of Delegates this year. He also has been elected to the Virginia Academy of Physician Assistants Board of Directors.

Howard Straker, EdD, MPH, PA-C, assistant professor of PA Studies and of Prevention and Community Health at the Milken Institute School of Public Health, has been named director of the PA/MPH program after serving as co-director for many years. He is working closely with colleagues at Milken on curriculum revisions to be implemented in the fall of 2020. Straker is also serving as president-elect of the Physician Assistant Education Association. He will become president in 2020.

Marianne Vail, DHSc, MS, PA-C, assistant professor, was selected by the Class of 2020 to receive the Golden Apple Teaching Award. She continues to serve as an appointee of the Mayor of Washington, D.C., on the Developmental Disabilities Fatality Review Committee.

Jennifer Wall, PA-C, returned to clinical practice in critical care this year. She also gave birth to a beautiful baby girl in June. Mom and baby are both doing great!

Karen Wright, PhD, PA-C, director of the PA Program, assistant professor, and assistant dean of Student Life and Academic Support, was appointed to a second term as the American Academy of Physician Assistants medical liaison to the National Association of Minority Medical Educators. She is in her fifth year as program director of the GW PA program.

THANK YOU TO OUR PRECEPTORS

The first day of a student’s clinical rotation is probably the most exciting day they experience during their entire PA education. In a time when clinical education is exploding with student learners, the GW PA Program recognizes how fortunate we are to have such wonderful preceptors who are committed to student education and mentorship. We have over 85 different clinical sites with too many preceptors to count, who play a vital role in our students’ education.

We want to express our sincere gratitude to all our clinical preceptors, their colleagues, and staff who welcome our students into their practices and institutions and provide such excellent learning opportunities.

If you would be interested in becoming a preceptor, please see our website for more information.