

Current information about the CHA/PA Physician Assistant Program at the University of Colorado Denver.

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## CHA/PA Newsletter

Read on to learn more about students in Tanzania, Diabetes Camp, our Alumni Reception, and much more!



### A Graduate's Passion for the Underserved

**Austin Waskey, Class of 2013,** tried to ignore his nagging desire to practice medicine. He was teaching high school science for over four years, when he decided it was time for action. He spent the next four years continuing to



### Global Health Students in Tanzania

This summer, Alison Barbieri, PA-S2, and I were fortunate enough to have the opportunity to complete a clinical rotation at the St. Francis Referral Hospital in Ifakara, Tanzania as part of the Global

teach, while working on his PA application and prerequisite courses. He was accepted into the CHA/PA program the summer of 2010 and has never looked back. Austin initially planned on attending medical school to practice as a family physician. Yet, after volunteering at hospitals and medical offices, he learned more about the PA profession and realized that it was a better fit for him.

The CHA/PA program offers various tracks, one of which is the CU Unite track. The CU Unite track is designed for students who are committed to serving the uninsured and those with limited access to health care in urban areas. Austin's participation in the track enabled him to learn Spanish, gain exposure to underserved healthcare, and complete more clinical rotations in a family practice setting. Additionally, he was able to interact with a community of like-minded faculty and students. Austin has worked at the Stout Street Health Center since graduation. He is passionate about caring for the poor and underserved and is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to care for them in that setting. The Stout Street Health Center provides primary care to homeless adults and children. This population tends to have a very high rate of

Health Track. The Global Health Track is designed to provide educational and experiential opportunities to students interested in international health care. Common problems faced in a rural African setting are shortages of doctors, unreliable drug supply, uncertain water and electricity, and insufficient equipment, all of which Ifakara is not immune to. We worked closely with the doctors in the Chronic Disease and One Stop clinics, which collectively provide continuous care for HIV infected adults, pregnant women and exposed/infected infants and children. The doctors demonstrated how they navigate through the lack of resources to treat the difficult disease of HIV/AIDS and the opportunistic infections, such as TB and Cryptococcal Meningitis. We witnessed real successes in reductions of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, improvement of adherence to antiretroviral therapy, and treatment of opportunistic infections. We even had a chance to spend time in the Labor Ward and assist with delivery of newborns! Overall, Ifakara welcomed us and this experience furthered our commitment to Global Health. We hope to return during our 3rd year!

mental illness, substance abuse, and childhood trauma.

Austin especially values the integrated team of providers at Stout Street. He works with a doctor, nurse, dental hygienist, behavioral health provider, and psychiatrist. CHA/PA's mission is in action with a graduate passionate to serve in an underserved setting. "As a PA student, I learned that I am drawn to helping the poor and underserved. I find it fulfilling and exciting. I have never been bored at work. Never."



### My AAPA Challenge Bowl Experience

As a first year student, I really didn't know what to expect from the AAPA Challenge Bowl. Leading up to the competition, I was looking forward to representing our CHA/PA program and meeting students from other programs. But as I walked into the auditorium that evening, I was surprised by

Erin Chojnacki, Class of 2016



### Diabetes Camp

Diabetes camp was a very unique and immersive experience. It changed the way I think about type 1 diabetes in more than just a scientific way. While I learned a lot about managing a child with diabetes medically-speaking, I also learned the social ramifications the disease can have on a child and their family.

Here are some facts about my campers: All of them were diagnosed during or shortly after an episode of diabetic ketoacidosis. Most of the campers were diagnosed before the age of ten, and many did not know other diabetics before coming to camp. All of them had experienced some sort of taunting or exclusion because of their diabetes, so they cannot wait to see each other next year's camp!

The amount of work it took to keep these girls' blood sugars normal was enlightening. By the third day, I began to whine about

the flashing lights, fun music and spirited costumes of the audience. I think my favorite part was seeing our own University of Colorado student section arrive and cheer our team on.

The questions were quite challenging from the very first round. They covered a wide range of specialties and topics, and racing to answer each of them before the other teams was very difficult. I am still so impressed with my teammates, second year students Kelly Finnegan and Megan Smith, and their quick knowledge of clinical practice. Even though our team had not been specifically practicing for this event, we made it through three rounds, putting us in the top 9 schools!

The Challenge Bowl was definitely one of the highlights for me from the national AAPA conference. Seeing so many PA programs and their enthusiastic students and alumni come together made me excited to be part of the physician assistant community. Whether as a contestant or a cheerleader, I look forward to supporting our team again next year.

Adelaide Ockey, Class of 2017



my lack of sleep, but I realized that I would soon go home to a huge meal and know that my blood sugar was not dangerously high. For my campers, it never stops. These kids must count every carb at every meal and snack, log it and figure out how much insulin to give themselves – for the rest of their lives! Diabetes is truly relentless. I am glad to have had this experience because it was a great way to understand a disease through the eyes of my patient. How often do we as clinicians get to spend that much time with our patients?

Caitlin Allison, Class of 2017



### Global Health Conference

On Saturday, September 19, 2015, CHA/PA hosted the 2015 Physician Assistants for Global Health (PAGH) Conference on the University of Colorado Anschutz Campus. The program featured an array of speakers addressing various global topics. Ruth Ballweg, the past Director of the MEDEX Northwest Physician Assistant Program, was the keynote speaker. She addressed the development of the PA

## CHA/PA Student Elected to SAAAPA Board of Directors

This May, at the AAPA (American Academy of Physician Assistants) Conference in San Francisco, I was elected to the Board of Directors of SAAAPA as the Western Regional Director. SAAAPA is the student branch of the AAPA and serves PA students across the country in a variety of ways. At the conference each year, SAAAPA holds a two-day meeting called the Assembly of Representatives (AOR) where one student from each school is present to debate and vote on student-proposed resolutions. These resolutions then become the agenda items for the Board of Directors and SAAAPA volunteer groups to work on/complete throughout the upcoming year. My role as the Western Regional Director is to represent PA students in my 12-state region to ensure their voice is heard, disseminate information from the national level to students in my region, co-lead the Leadership Volunteer Group, and serve as a member on the Board of Directors to accomplish other tasks during the upcoming year. I'm excited about this opportunity and look forward to the next 12 months!

Brielle Smith, Class of 2016

profession around the world.



## Faculty Member's Visit to Capitol Hill

I visited Capitol Hill last May to advocate for the PA profession. My day at Capitol Hill started off by meeting my PAEA staff partner and hopping in an Uber car for the Senate. First stop was at Colorado Senator Cory Gardner's office. From the time we entered the security screening area and made our way through the cavernous hallways of the Hart Senate building, I couldn't help but notice the energy around me. There was a palpable sense of purpose in the air coming from experienced "legal eagles", journalists, and up and coming politicians. Suits everywhere! As we entered the Senator's office, I had a new sense of purpose and pride for why I was here. My voice matters. As a citizen of the United States of America, I have the privilege and



## Comings and Goings

On May 21st, the 44th CHA/PA class celebrated their Convocation Ceremony. School of Medicine Dean Dr. John Reilly, Pediatric Chair Dr. Stephen Daniels, and Program Director Jonathan Bowser addressed the students during the ceremony. Many family and friends joined the graduates to celebrate this momentous occasion.

The Class of 2018 arrived on campus May 28th for two days of orientation where they had the opportunity to learn about all of the services available on campus as well as hear from our faculty. We are excited to have them join us!

right of access to my government officials.

As we waited patiently to meet with Senator Gardner's staff, who should we walk by but the Senator himself. I quickly stood up, extended my hand and introduced myself. I even had my picture taken with him. It was so exciting! But the real reason I was there was to talk about the issues facing Physician Assistant Educators and PA students across the country, and thanks to the helpful lobby team at PAEA it couldn't have been easier. They supplied me with a brief tutorial video on what to expect from my visit. They armed me with handouts containing brief but important information to communicate to congressional staffers. I will never miss an opportunity to do a Hill visit.

Joyce Nieman, MHS-PA-C



CHA/PA Alumni Reception



CHA/PA In the News



CHA/PA on

CHA/PA graduates, faculty, and students had a wonderful time at the alumni reception at May's AAPA Conference. The reception took place in the gorgeous View Lounge at the San Francisco Marriott Marquis. CHA/PA graduates and students enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and the opportunity to meet new people and catch up with old friends.

Katie Nelson, Class of 2016, was awarded the Barbara Quarantillo Scholarship Award, which provides funding to attend The Children's Hospital Annual Pediatric Infectious Disease Conference held in Vail.

LEADS track student Emma Smaldino, Class of 2017, was published in the [Denver Post](#) discussing LGBT equity.

Program Director Jonathan Bowser was accepted into the University of Colorado Academy of Medical Educators. He is the 1st PA to hold this distinction.

Program Director Jonathan Bowser published an article "Commentaries on health services research" in the [Journal of the American Academy of Physician](#)

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Assistants with two  
colleagues.

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