

# TRANSFORM

## THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH

is at the leading edge of a complex shift in health care in the United States – from primarily caring for the sick to keeping people healthy, fit, and resilient.



## MORE HEALTH LESS MEDICINE

It's no secret. Health care in America is changing. University of Utah Health is emerging as a leader in that grand transformation. The College of Health – your college – is alongside with big ideas and paradigm-shifting breakthroughs.

This magazine is our way of reconnecting with you, alumni, and friends of the College. To former students, the College has played an important role in your life and career. To our philanthropic supporters, your generosity keeps us at the top of our game.

We believe it's important to keep you updated on what we're doing and where we're going – leveraging our strengths to support the clinical, educational, and

research missions of the new University of Utah Health. We're helping researchers and clinicians in neurosciences, diabetes/metabolism/obesity, cancer and cardiovascular research, community outreach, and more.

We are also engaged in high-impact programs to enhance student success and faculty research.

Read on. You'll learn about how your college has been making a difference in big ways and small. We encourage you join us in the transformation of health care.

*David H. Perrin*



David H. Perrin,  
College of Health  
dean

# INSIDE TRANSFORM

4, 6

Student voices

5

Realignment

7

By the numbers

9

U of U Health universe

10

Grants, honors

22

Shared legacy

23

Greatest challenge

## 12



### PROMISE

For the past 34 years, Scott Summers has been trying to make good on a vow to his father: to cure diabetes.

## 14



### REFUGE

Yda Smith is applying OT principles and practices to help victims of unimaginable violence.

## 16



### TWEETS

Could Twitter messages reveal something about our health? Quynh Nguyen believes they can.

## 18



### NATURE

Many people receive a mental boost by spending time outside. PRT researchers are asking why.

## 20



### OBLIGATION

Even in retirement, Karen McLeese found one more scholarship to fund.

**Cover:** Can an exploration of relatively untouched wildlands such as The Narrows of the Virgin River in Zion National Park have therapeutic, or even transformative, power? It's the type of question College of Health researchers in one program, Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, are asking. (Patrick Walch/Getty Images)



## A STUDENT'S VOICE

# THE MANY HATS OF KARY WOODRUFF

**K**ary Woodruff's energy seems boundless. Mother of two, PhD candidate, clinical dietitian, associate professor in the College of Health's Department of Nutrition and Integrative Physiology, and volunteer extraordinaire are only a few of her distinguishing titles.

Woodruff grew up an athlete, valuing leadership, strength, and confidence. Her impassioned study of the treatment of eating disorders has revealed that helping women and girls develop those same attributes can improve their lives and overall health. "In giving women a

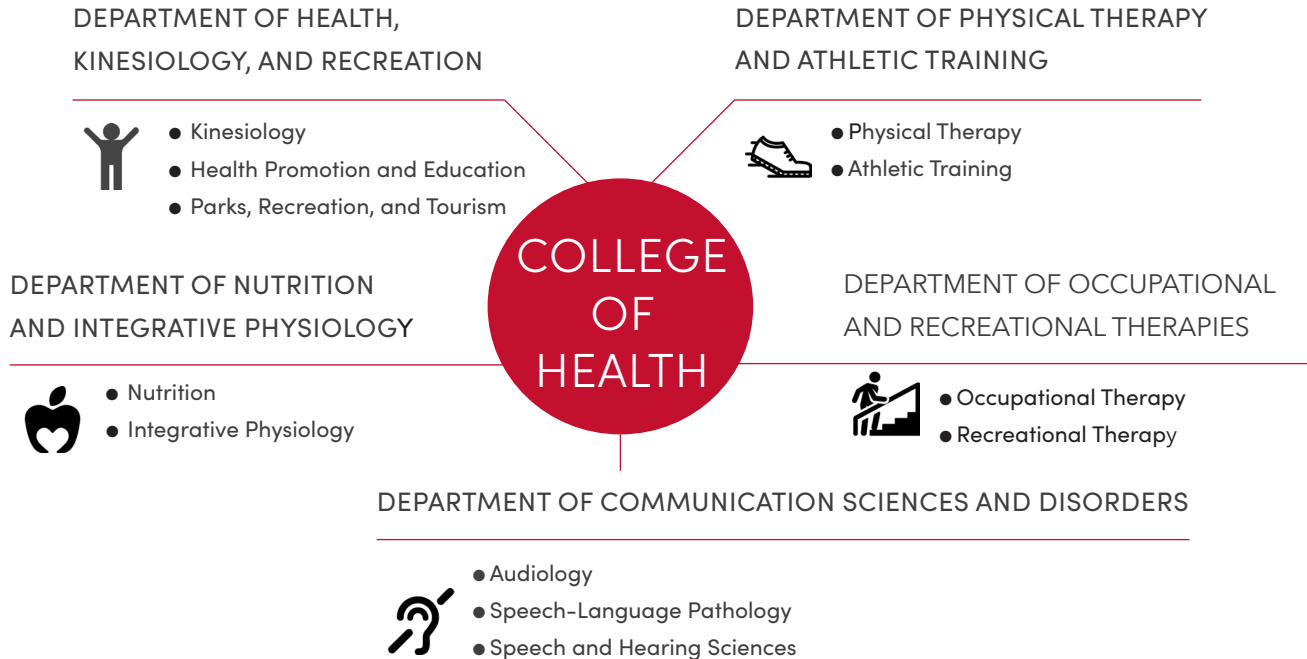
voice, often their eating disorders become less relevant," she says.

As a volunteer, Woodruff has helped HIV orphans in South Africa find homes and coached women in Ecuador to find self-confidence, enabling them to provide for their families. In Utah, she founded a chapter of Girls on the Run, a nonprofit helping girls ages 8-11 build confidence through running.

Woodruff stands at the threshold of a bright future, brimming with athletic energy and missionary zeal.

# LESS CAN BE MORE

In 2016, the **College of Health** realigned from seven departments to five. No degree programs were lost. In fact, the realignment created opportunities for exciting new degree programs and initiatives.





## A STUDENT'S VOICE

# TECHNO THERAPIST

Until it emerged as his top career match in a vocational aptitude test at Brigham Young

University, James Gardner, OTR/L, had never really heard of occupational therapy. Intrigued, he set out to learn more. "I fell in love with it," he says.

After graduating from the College of Health's Occupational Therapy program in 2012, Gardner started working in University of Utah Health's rehabilitation division, specializing in assistive technology. His patients range from a paralyzed child he helped play video games again to a 90-year-old blind man he taught to use an iPad for reading.

"I help people access technology from wherever they are," says Gardner.

Gardner is a nationally recognized assistive technology expert. "The future of assistive technology is bright because everything becomes cheaper and easier to use," he says. "I hope to spread that vision around the country. We don't withhold knowledge ... We want to help."

Gardner is happy about his career choice: "I'm in a dream job, and I can't see myself wanting to do anything else."

## CONSIDER ...



# 2,200

**STUDENTS** enrolled in the College of Health; slightly fewer than that of U of U Health's other four colleges combined (2,279)



# 210

**LIFE-SAVING EMERGENCY RESPONDERS** trained in the Health Promotion and Education program in 2016

# 15 | 20 | 30

**NATIONAL RANKINGS** for the Health Promotion and Education, Physical Therapy, and Speech Language Pathology programs, respectively. (Top Master's in Health Care Education; U.S. News & World Report)



# 2,825

**VISITS** to the L. S. Skaggs Patient Wellness Center gym in the first five months of operation (Aug.-Dec. 2016)



# \$2.27m

in new **RESEARCH GRANT AND CONTRACTS** awarded to 28 faculty members in 2016 – a 33% increase over 2015.



# 138

**PEER-REVIEWED** research articles published by faculty in 2016



HEALTH IS MORE  
THAN THE  
ABSENCE  
OF DISEASE. IT IS  
PHYSICAL,  
MENTAL,  
EMOTIONAL,  
SPIRITUAL,  
AND SOCIAL  
WELL-BEING.

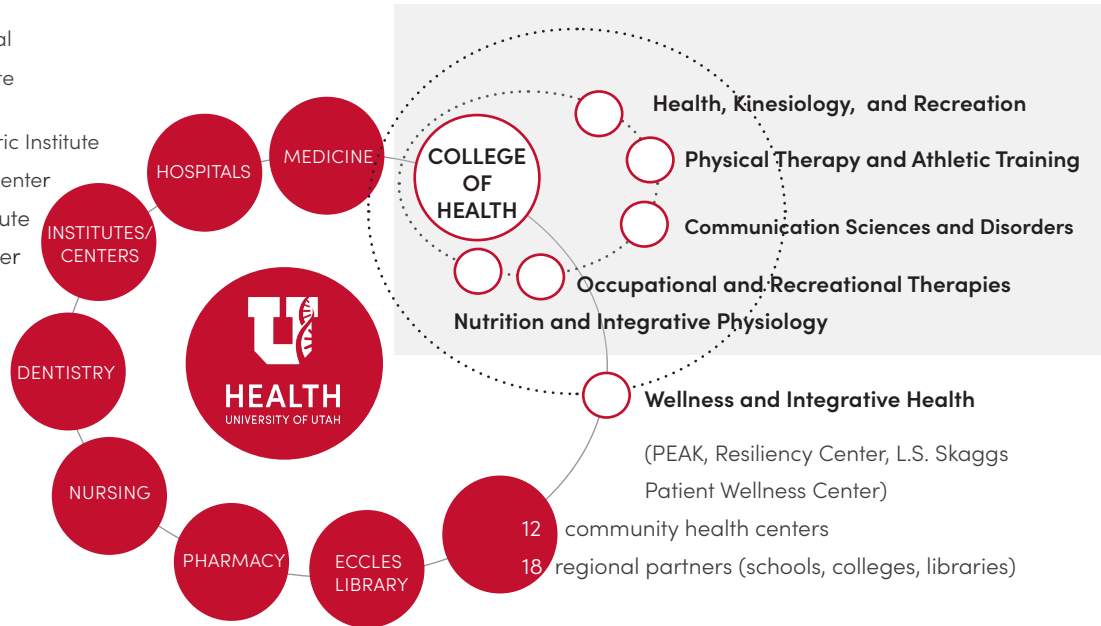




# UNIVERSITY OF UTAH HEALTH UNIVERSE

“Our mission at the **College of Health** is to promote health and enhance quality of life through the discovery, application, and dissemination of information on health promotion, risk reduction, disease prevention, fitness, nutrition, recreation, and the rehabilitation process for a dynamic and changing society.” – **David H. Perrin, dean**

- University of Utah Hospital
- Huntsman Cancer Institute (cancer hospital)
- University Neuropsychiatric Institute
- University Orthopaedic Center
- Huntsman Cancer Institute
- John A. Moran Eye Center



**Previous page:** After graduating from the College of Health, students have a range of career options. Lyndsay Young, DPT, is a physical therapist for the U.S. Ski Team.

# GRANTS & HONORS 2016

SPINAL MANIPULATION  
CAMPING  
VOLUNTEERING  
HEARING DISORDERS  
STUDENT ADVISING

## JULIE FRITZ, PhD, PT, ATC

Associate Dean for Research



### **\$1.2 million research grant**

*The National Institutes of Health*

For a three-year study of the mechanisms of spinal manipulation and to examine different treatment strategies designed to capitalize on their effects. Fritz hopes to use the data to improve clinical outcomes for patients. This was the largest grant to a College of Health researcher in 2016.

## JIM SIBTHORP, PhD

Professor, Parks, Recreation & Tourism



### **2016 Hedley S. Dimock Award**

*The American Camp Association  
(ACA)*

For significant contributions to the camping experience. Sibthorp also received a \$400,000 research grant (shared with ACA) from the Spencer Foundation to study factors in structured camp-leadership training that contribute to college and career success.

## ALEXIS PEARL LEE

Director, Connect2Health



### **2016 Elizabeth Fuhrman Gardner Prize**

*for The Outstanding Woman Student  
in the Health Sciences*

Alexis sets a consistent example of service toward diverse and underserved populations. As an undergraduate, she served in various student and volunteer leadership positions and played a leading role in Connect2Health, a student-run volunteer group connecting underserved patients to existing community resources.

## SKYLER JENNINGS, AUD, PhD

Assistant Professor, Comm. Sciences



### **\$982,000 research grant**

*NIH/NIDCD (National Institute on  
Deafness and Other Communication  
Disorders)*

To study the role of the medial olivocochlear reflex in perceiving fluctuating sounds and speech-in-noise performance. The longterm goal is to understand the relationship between auditory perception and physiological mechanisms responsible for adapting to the local soundscape.

## KELLY C. BROWN, M Ed

Academic Adviser, Occupational Therapy



### **2016 Outstanding Advising Award – Primary Role**

*NACADA, the Global Community for  
Academic Advising*

Presented to individuals who have demonstrated qualities associated with outstanding academic advising of students.



# A SON'S PROMISE

SCOTT SUMMERS

Chair, Department of Nutrition  
and Integrative Physiology

College of Health

**S**cott Summers was only 14 when his father, a fit 41-year old, broke the news that he had diabetes. Shortly after, the young teenager boldly promised to find a cure. For the last 34 years, Summers has been trying to make good on his word.

Though finding a cure for a disease affecting over 400 million people has eluded him, Summer's ambitious teenage promise has led to a fruitful scientific career. "I can prevent diabetes and heart disease in mice. That's my claim to fame," says Summers. He started a company to find drugs that do the same in people.

Now, Summers is the chair of the Department of Nutrition and Integrative Physiology in the College of Health, where his research continues. Some of his latest work has potentially answered the riddle of why people who are thin can still end up with diabetes. The study published in *Cell Metabolism* in November 2016 found that the accumulation of ceramides, a toxic class of fat

metabolites, might make people more prone to Type 2 diabetes. Ceramide accumulation seems more related to genetics than to overall body composition.

Even with continued discoveries, progress toward a cure has been slow. "Time is running out," Summer's father recently told him.

The truth is that science is a low-yield endeavor. "What my father doesn't understand is that it's not because of the ineptitude or lack of intellectual acumen of scientists," says Summers. "The reality is that the body is much more complicated than I realized, and our understanding of it is still juvenile."

Fact is, the answer to his father's question of when he will find a cure for diabetes might be "never." But Summers remains optimistic. "I'm still fighting the good fight," he says. "With all of the new tools we have, I have to believe that something great is right around the corner."



# CREATING A REFUGE

YDA SMITH

Assistant Professor  
Occupational Therapy

College of Health

Recently, The Today Show's Al Roker, whose autistic son is learning life skills taught by an occupational therapist, saluted the profession: "What you do is God's work on Earth every day."

An example of an OT practitioner in Utah doing "God's work" is Yda Smith, PhD, OTR/L, an assistant professor of Occupational and Recreational Therapies.

In addition to her teaching load, Smith founded and runs the Occupational Therapy Immigration and Refugee Resettlement Fieldwork Program, a project unique to the College of Health among universities in the United States. It applies core OT principles and practices to help victims of unimaginable violence and day-in, day-out persecution.

Smith and her students teach everyday skills to refugees from Somalia, Burma, Iraq, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – some arriving in Utah directly from

primitive camps having never used running water or electricity. "They're just plopped into Salt Lake City. Many are illiterate even in their own language," Smith said. "We teach just about everything you could imagine about navigating life, all of the daily stuff we take for granted." Turning on an oven, using a phone, paying a bill, riding a bus, filling a prescription, passing a driving test.

Smith says her work has made an impact on her own life, as well her clients and students. "When you spend time with them and hear their stories, you cannot believe how lucky you are. You learn how to be a better person; how to be stronger; how to appreciate things more."

David Perrin, dean of the College of Health, said her work aims "to promote a climate of respect ... where people feel safe, valued, and welcomed."

Smith earned the College's inaugural Inclusive Excellence Award in 2017.



# OF TWEETS, TRENDS & HEALTH

QUYNH NGUYEN

Assistant Professor  
Health, Kinesiology, and Recreation

College of Health



**B**etween mid-2014 to mid-2015 “coffee” was the most tweeted food in the continental United States, followed by “beer” and “pizza.” Besides hinting at which foods are popular, could Twitter messages reveal something about our health? Quynh Nguyen, PhD, believes they can.

Nguyen is lead author of a study examining what tweets can tell us about community health. She and her co-authors surveyed nearly 80 million tweets and sorted through the 4 million referencing foods at opposite ends of the health spectrum: healthy and unhealthy.

Twitter has already been used to track health by gauging smoking prevalence and finding sources of illness outbreaks. The difference here is that these types of comparisons could provide clues as to how our surroundings – the environment that we live, work, and play in – impact health and well-being.

Nguyen and her colleagues observed that communities tweeting positively about healthy foods tend to be healthier overall. Areas with more chatter about walking, dancing, running, and other physical activities have fewer deaths and lower obesity rates. Positive sentiments toward healthy foods broadly correlate with fewer deaths and chronic health conditions.

“Our data could be telling us that certain neighborhoods have fewer resources to support healthy diets,” says Nguyen. Neighborhoods laden with fast food restaurants might benefit from having better access to fresh produce.

Nguyen also investigated whether tweets can provide insights into a more elusive, but no less important, quality: happiness. They found that areas with more happy tweets had higher levels of physical activity; lower smoking, obesity, and diabetes rates; and lower mortality.



# THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE

Department of Health,  
Kinesiology, and Recreation

College of Health

**M**any people receive a mental boost by spending time outside. Whether river rafting, hiking The Narrows in Zion National Park, or just visiting a local park, the effect is noticeable.

With a \$750,000 grant from the Keneda Fund, Kelly Bricker, PhD, Daniel Dustin, PhD, and Matt Brownlee, PhD, from Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (PRT) are studying the restorative, health-promoting benefits of the great outdoors on veterans and their families.

“What is it about being outdoors that promotes resiliency, builds coping skills, and eases mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder?” says Bricker, PRT program director.

To find out, researchers on the three-year study will do much of their work in outdoor “laboratories” in partnership with not-for-profit organizations that offer nature-based outings. The study will include activities like river running,

mountain climbing, hiking, camping, and sightseeing.

The project supports the University’s participation in the global Healthy Parks Healthy People movement, established to “reframe the role of parks and public lands as an emerging, powerful health prevention strategy,” according to the National Park Service.

In addition to studying nature’s impact on mental health, researchers will seek to answer questions about how nature-based experiences might improve veterans’ family relationships. They also want to learn about potential barriers preventing mental health benefits from being realized by veterans and their families and what can be done to remove them.

“We want to examine the prospect of nature’s healing powers across activities and across settings to determine if certain situations yield better results than others,” says Dustin. “Our challenge is to produce defensible science.”



# 'WE ARE OBLIGED TO GIVE BACK'

KAREN MCLEESE

Former Development Director,  
S.J. Quinney College of Law

**K**aren McLeese knows what it means to give. The former development director for the University of Utah's S.J. Quinney College of Law devoted her 40-year career to stewarding philanthropy for student scholarships, faculty development, and an enormous capital campaign. But even in retirement, McLeese determined she had more to give.

Experiencing symptoms from a torn rotator cuff, McLeese began a regiment of uncomfortable but committed physical therapy – surgery wasn't an option. She chose Elizabeth Kunzer, DPT, alumna of the College of Health's Doctor of Physical Therapy program. For almost two years, Kunzer worked with McLeese to fix the injured shoulder and improve her overall health. Their time together in the clinic turned into a lasting friendship.

McLeese learned that of the over 150 enrolled physical therapy students, less than 20 percent received scholarship aid. "I was surprised and a little shocked to

learn how few scholarships were available in the physical therapy department," she said. "There should be a great number of donors for a department that trains people to rehabilitate others in critical need."

From working at the law school, McLeese knew firsthand the impact of scholarships. So in 2014 she created the Elizabeth E. Kunzer Endowed Scholarship Fund, named for the therapist who had caringly guided her recovery. The scholarship is available to second year physical therapy students with a demonstrated commitment to learning, professional growth, and participation in extracurricular and volunteer activities. The scholarship so far has helped six students in the College of Health.

"My hope for this department and its students is for enhanced private support in gratitude for the rehabilitation we may well experience because of an unfortunate life experience," says McLeese. "As members of that unique club, we are obliged to give back."



## A SHARED LEGACY

**Y**our College of Health plays an important role in the transformation of America's health care system.

Many of the diseases people suffer from are preventable. In fact, about 75 percent of medical care expenses can be prevented through positive lifestyle changes – fewer hospital visits, medical bills, shots, medications, and surgeries for preventable chronic diseases.

More health and less medicine lead to more fulfilled and enjoyable lives.

The University of Utah Health is tackling preventable disease and providing rehabilitation by leveraging the College of Health's strengths: its partnerships with researchers and clinicians in diabetes, metabolism, obesity, neurosciences, cancer and physical

activity, and cardiovascular research and training.

Join us in solving today's most pressing health care challenges by creating a professorship to recruit and retain faculty; giving toward a student scholarship to attract the next generation of pioneers; helping with the purchase of equipment to train clinicians and provide services.

The College has been a committed health-care educator and provider since the early days of the University. Please consider the College in your estate plans as a way to preserve our legacy through yours.

Contact **Courtney Garay** at 801.585.3205 for further information on joining this transformation.

# THE GREATEST CHALLENGE

The transformation of health care is our generation's greatest challenge, and at the University of Utah we see this as an opportunity to lead the way.

Through discovering and implementing new knowledge to prevent chronic diseases, The College of Health is contributing significantly to our work in the prevention and treatment of cancer, diabetes, neurological, and cardiovascular disease.

## **A. Lorris Betz, MD, PhD**

Interim CEO, University of Utah Health  
Executive Dean, University of Utah School of Medicine  
Senior Vice President for Health Sciences





## COLLEGE OF HEALTH

383 COLOROW, ROOM 391  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84108

Learn more at [health.utah.edu](http://health.utah.edu), [@UofUCoH](https://twitter.com/UofUCoH), and [facebook.com/uofucoh](https://facebook.com/uofucoh)

**transform** *tran(t)s fôrm* | verb

make a thorough or dramatic change in the form, appearance, or character of