THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR

March 13, 2020, is a day many of us at the university will never forget. It was the day we sent students home. The transition to remote learning was underway as COVID-19 tightened its grip worldwide. I can recall that the uncertainty around the pandemic was immobilizing. We watched as countries like Italy and Spain were overwhelmed and struggled to keep their population safe. We were left with the frightening notion that we would be facing similar challenges if drastic measures were not taken. The anxiety in the community and across campus was palpable. At the university, the process of shutting down research, sending students home and pivoting to remote learning was an enormous undertaking that, at times, seemed too big a task. Almost two years later, on February 7th, 2022, we welcomed all students back to campus, and the campus seemed alive again. People are socializing, smiling, and laughing as they enjoy a relatively "normal" university experience.

Many will debate whether the crisis was handled appropriately. From my perspective, however, executive leadership at the university made difficult but responsible decisions to keep our students, staff and faculty safe. Our Faculty Dean provided unprecedented support to all departments. The response by our faculty, staff and students in Kinesiology exceeded all expectations. We came together as a community and served in the best interest of our students.

By and large, our students understood that while the measures taken weren't ideal, they were necessary. I'm sure we will face additional COVID-related challenges in the future, however, we should enjoy this moment, appreciate our progress, and know that we are equipped to overcome even the most daunting challenges as a department and community.

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UNIQUE UNDERGRADUATE Highlight

"The sense of community. As our program is small, we form strong connections with others who are not only in the same program, but are also interested and are passionate about the same topics as you are. Through these connections, you are able to cultivate life-long friendships and support for your journey as a student." - S. Abrahim 2021

Salma is a fourth-year student who represents the kinesiology program as a Faculty of Science tour guide, as a Big Blue, a kin mentor and a MacWiSTEM Mentor. As a tour guide, she assists the Faculty of Science in recruiting qualified students to McMaster by providing one-on-one communication opportunities and in-person tours (pre-Covid-19) of the Science facilities and to potential applicants and the general community. She is interested in making a positive impact on the McMaster community and has become a leader in several initiatives over her time at Mac. During the first wave of the pandemic, she assisted in delivering and making of 3D PPE to assist hospitals and clinics that needed an increased number of face shields. She has volunteered at PACE and at St. Joseph's in downtown Hamilton as a patient care volunteer. She is currently the co-president of WUSC McMaster, a club that helps sponsor student refugees to come to Canada, and is also a co-director and co-founder of Pediatric Mental Health Initiative (PMHI): the first club at McMaster that actively advocates for children's mental health. Through collaborating with a mental health researcher and professor, she has co-edited the publishing of a book that discusses mental health in children and Covid-19.

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GRADUATE Highlight

"McMaster's Kinesiology program has provided me with the invaluable opportunity to cultivate my learning amongst a talented cohort of scholars and fellow students."
- J. Cherubini, 2021

Joshua Cherubini is a first year PhD student studying in the Vascular Dynamics Laboratory under the supervision of Dr. Maureen MacDonald. Joshua has been fortunate to have completed undergraduate research placements in the Vascular Dynamics Laboratory and considers the collaborative and nurturing culture of the VDL to be instrumental to furthering his learning. He is primarily involved with research that examines influence of sleep deprivation and physical activity on arterial function. Currently, he is learning a variety of scientific techniques including ultrasonography, cell culture, and other analysis methods as a means to further research arterial function. His work on arterial function has been published in several journals including the American Journal of Physiology – Heart and Circulatory Physiology, and the Journal of Artery Research. Joshua values scientific communication and has participated in public discussions including a radio interview and panels related to cardiovascular physiology. He also enjoys the opportunity to work with undergraduate and graduate students in collaborative and inclusive research communities. Outside of academics, Joshua has coached a number of youth hockey, football, and soccer teams and looks forward to every opportunity to participate in outdoor physical activities.

JOSHUA CHERUBINI
LEVEL 1 PhD
CHERUBJ@MCMASTER.CA

FACULTY Highlight

Happy February everyone! When Gianni asked me whether I’d be interested in being the Faculty Highlight in this month’s newsletter of course I said yes, but in this case it might be more aptly referred to as the Faculty Twilight. How does one find the words to succinctly express what it has meant to be a faculty member in the Dept. of Kinesiology for 33½ years? Where to start? I’ve had many students ask me over the years whether I liked my job and, in every single instance I answered, “I have the best job in the world.” This then usually led to me explaining to the student why I thought I had the best job in the world, and invariably I would then describe the joys of being able to interact with and influence eager young minds, the freedom of being able to ask the research questions that were of interest to me, and the satisfaction gained from being able to contribute to how the university ran at its various levels... a general synopsis of our 40/40/20 workload model. While this was (and is) all true, I do believe there is something unique about Kinesiology at McMaster that makes it extra special. This insight became especially clear to me when I took an administrative position in the School of Graduate Studies and was able to see how other departments in the university operated.

One of the things that is most special about our Dept. of Kinesiology is that everyone does a great job in keeping their egos in check. We have some national and international superstars within our group, yet no one is made to feel less valuable or less of a contributor and invariably everyone comes together when making decisions on behalf of the Dept. Another key characteristic is that we have always maintained a healthy collaborative environment, where interdisciplinary research is both encouraged and supported. I believe I mentioned this in one of my last Council meetings, but it is this collaboration between faculty members that really shaped my own research career and made it far richer and more fulfilling than I could have ever imagined. Mutual respect, supportive leadership and a lack of research silos exemplify Kinesiology at McMaster and make it stand out among other departments.

Looking back over my career the one thing that was constant was change. When I was first hired we were the School of Physical Education and Athletics in the Faculty of Social Sciences. PACE was non-existent; there was no E-wing, and the current gym for MacCardiac, MacSeniors and MacWarriors was a dance studio. Over the ensuing years we split from Athletics, changed our name, changed our degree, added a PhD program and changed our Faculty. There were many highs (and lows) accompanying these changes, but my proudest accomplishments were the development of the MacSeniors program (after Neil McCartney and myself completed what I think is still the largest and longest RCT of strength training in seniors), followed by the MacWalkers program and then the MacMSFitt program. Being able to translate the knowledge gained from RCT’s into community-based programs coupled with the added benefits of providing education/training opportunities for our undergraduate students within these programs, has truly been the highlight of my career.

I’d like to thank all of you for making ‘going to work’ something I looked forward to every day. I can’t tell you how many times people have commented to me about how well everyone in Kinesiology seems to get along and I think there is a very simple reason for this. We’ve all made the effort to get to know each other, share ideas, share our personal journeys, and in so doing, have not only become better at what we do as academics, but have become genuine friends. Suffice it to say, as much as I am totally ready for this next stage of my life, I will miss interacting with the people who were my work family for so many years.

Take care everyone... See you at the retirement party!

DR. AUDREY HICKS
HICKSAL@MCMASTER.CA
Supriya credits McMaster with teaching her how to develop a deep interdisciplinary mindset that set the foundation for the rest of her educational journey and led her into the highly complex world of sustainability.

"Kinesiology in itself is a broad, interdisciplinary field of study approaching the human body from multiple perspectives. In addition to that, McMaster’s Kinesiology program also allows students the flexibility to choose electives that interest you and support your goals, with the option to minor in any discipline of your choice outside of the Faculty of Science. While I focused on the science stream of Kinesiology (I literally took all the anatomy and physiology courses available each year), I was also studying religion, philosophy, economics, and business, leading me to minor in the latter. Both the quality of education and interdisciplinary structure of McMaster’s Kinesiology program helped further develop my interdisciplinary mindset, helping contribute to my success as both a sustainability advocate, corporate leader, and social entrepreneur." – Supriya Verma 2013

To learn more about Supriya’s journey, please visit her alumni story.

WELCOME - New Faculty Alert

It’s surprisingly difficult to put into words the emotions that come up being back on campus as an Assistant Professor of Kinesiology. In part, it feels like a homecoming; I had the pleasure of working at other distinguished institutions within Canada and abroad, but McMaster is my home. It also feels surreal, and not just because we’ve all spent the past 2 years shut away from each other in the face of COVID. When I was a PhD student, I dreamed of leading my own lab in McMaster’s esteemed Department of Kinesiology, and I’m still a bit stunned that this dream is now my reality. I truly believe there is no better environment in which to launch, and grow, my research program on nutrition and metabolism in cancer. I can’t wait to work with PACE and contribute to the tradition of research excellence at MacKin.

DR. KIRSTEN BELL
BELKES@MCMASTER.CA
BSSC - Black Student Success Centre

The Black Student Success Centre is dedicated to supporting, championing the holistic success and well-being of Black and African-descended students of all levels. They are guided by Ubuntu, an ancient African philosophy. Translated from the Xhosa language, Ubuntu means “I am because you are.” Ubuntu emphasizes the importance of connection, community, and collective empowerment. The Black Student Success Centre, therefore, focuses on providing services, programming, and resources that center building a sense of belonging and safety amongst McMaster’s Black students. The BSSC launched in September 2021, and is located in PCCLL M07.

Email questions to bss@mcmaster.ca
Website address: https://blackstudentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/
Newsletter registration (open to all): https://blackstudentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/subscribe-to-newsletter/

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Dr. Martin Gibala* & Dr. Stu Phillips - Professor
- Both nominated for President’s Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision. *Indicates award recipient.

Dr. Aimee Nelson - Professor
- Received a MIRA Interdisciplinary fellowship grant for “Does exercise enhance synaptic plasticity in individuals with Mild Cognitive Impairment and in Aging?”

Dr. Jennifer Heisz - Professor
- Her new book “Move the Body, Heal the Mind: Overcome Anxiety, Depression, and Dementia and Improve Focus, Creativity, and Sleep” is available in digital formats, and print after March 8th.

SUCCESSFUL DEFENCES

Derek Stouth – Supervisor: V. Ljubicic – Thesis Title: “The role of CARM1 during skeletal muscle atrophy”
Date of Defence: December 16, 2021
Holiday dinner celebrations with the Vascular Dynamics Lab (Dr. MacDonald) and Protein Metabolism Lab (Dr. Phillips). Both gatherings were held at the University Club in November just before campus shut down again.

"IN THE LAB" PHOTO SUBMISSIONS CAN BE SENT TO LUONGK@MCMASTER.CA

WANTED: PARTICIPANTS

- Participants (17-30 years old) needed for online exercise psychology study
- Male and Female participants needed for a research study
- Participants needed for SIT research study
- Healthy (17-30 years old) participants needed for 4 weeks exercise training study (on line with remote training)
- Young women (18-30) needed for an exercise study
- Varsity athletes wanted for STAIR-CLIMBING research study
- Recruiting healthy individuals to take place in an exercise psychology study
- Healthy right-handed participants needed to take part in a study investigating sensorimotor integration in the hand.
- Older men (65-80 years old) participants needed for a research study
- Young, healthy adults needed for an exercise research study
- Young men (20-25 years old) participants needed for a natural supplement study
- Adults (18-60 years old) participants needed for an exercise study
- Participants needed for ECP research study
- Participants needed for HER research study
- Participants needed for HEATEX research study
- Research participants needed
- Young, healthy men (18-30 years old) needed to participate in single leg immobilization and resistance training.