

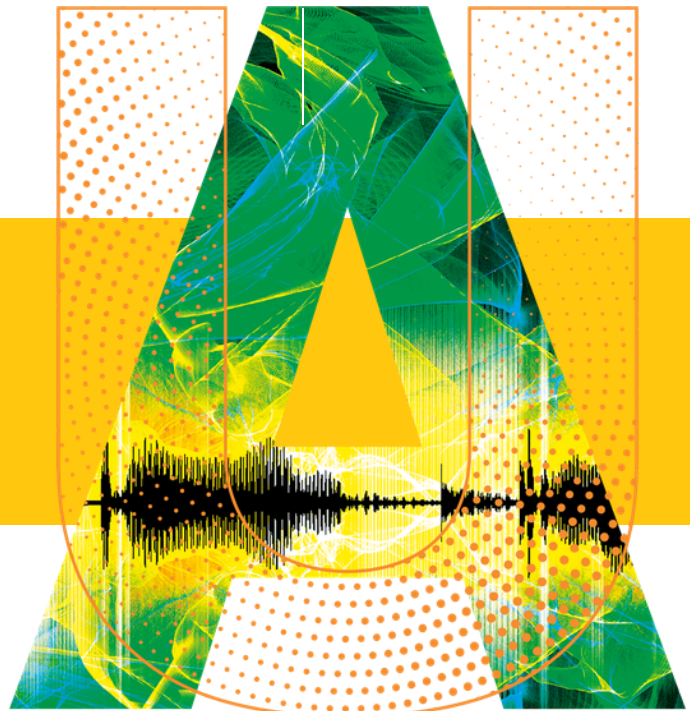


**UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA**

2025-26 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Department of Physical Therapy
Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine
College of Health Sciences



AUGUST 2026



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Chair Message

“ We are not just training the next generation of physical therapists — we are shaping a healthier, more compassionate future for all Albertans.



Guided by our new five-year **Strategic Compass**, we marked several major milestones: a successful accreditation visit for our Augustana campus, the grand opening of our **Musculoskeletal (MSK) & Sports Therapy Teaching Clinic**, and preparations for the launch of our **Rural Health Hub** in Camrose. Demand for our program remains remarkable — we now enrol a cohort of **129 students**, including an expanded group of **20 at the Augustana satellite**. None of this would be possible without our dedicated faculty and staff, or the community partners and physical therapists who provide hundreds of vital clinical placements each year.

Our faculty's excellence earned notable recognition this year. Lauren Beaupre received the **Alberta Medical Association's Medal of Honour**, Geoff Bostick was named a **McCalla Professor**, and Karim Fouad received the **Director's Award** from the **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke**. Our researchers published more than 100 peer-reviewed papers and secured major research and teaching grants advancing spinal cord injury recovery, stroke rehabilitation and inclusive dementia care, among other areas.

Just as important is how we work. We continued to deepen intentional relationships with Indigenous communities, guided by our Indigenous engagement team through events like the National Gathering of Elders. We invested in student mental health through the new **Dr. Judy Chepeha Physical Therapy Endowment for Mental Health and Wellbeing**, and committed to environmental sustainability across our growing clinics. We are not just training the next generation of physical therapists — we are shaping a healthier, more compassionate future for all Albertans.

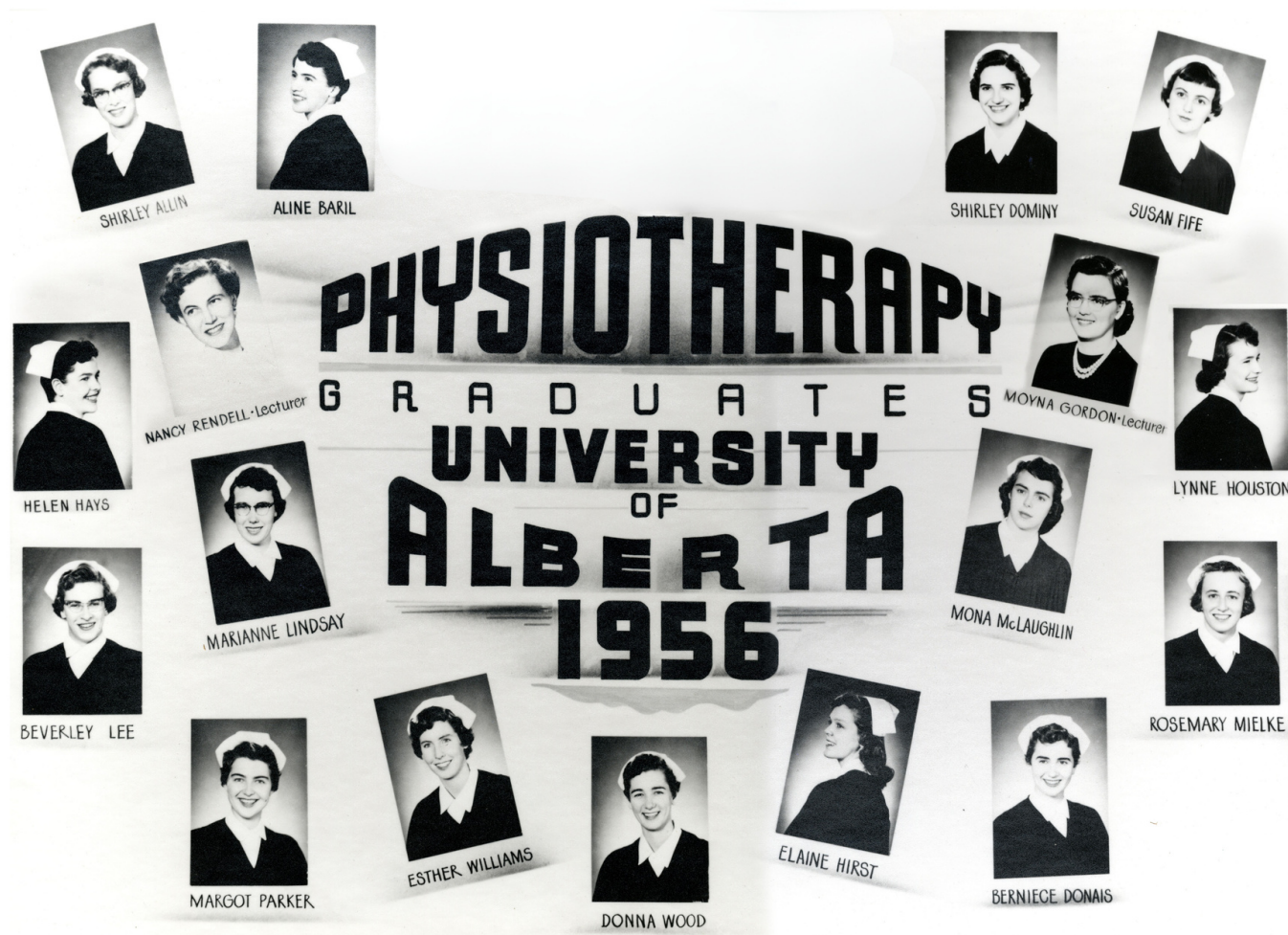
Finally, we extend our gratitude to Berni Martin and Jaynie Yang, who retired this year after decades of invaluable service, and congratulate Trish Manns as she steps into her new role as vice-provost (programs). Our thanks also go to Crystal MacLellan for her dedicated leadership as program director through the end of 2025. In 2026, we adopted a new leadership model, with Geoff Bostick as program director, Heather Bredy as clinical education lead and Gabriela Abbud as curriculum lead.

Change like this is only as good as the conversations that shape it, so I'd welcome your thoughts. Feel free to reach me anytime with feedback or suggestions at doug.gross@ualberta.ca or 780-492-2690.

Doug Gross, PhD

Professor and Chair, Department of Physical Therapy

Honouring our Legacy



This year is a celebration of milestones.

The Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine marks its 50th anniversary, while the Department of Physical Therapy celebrates 70 years since the graduation of its first class. Together, these anniversaries honour the founding class who established physical therapy education at the University of Alberta and the generations of clinicians, educators and researchers who have continued to build on their vision.

1956

THEN

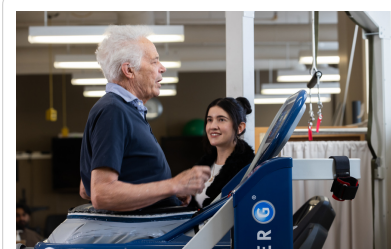
A trailblazing class that laid the foundation.



2026

NOW

Continuing the legacy and shaping what comes next.



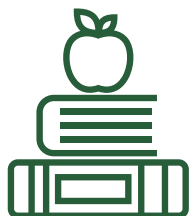
**FEATURE STORY**

Corbett Hall clinic nurtures new physio talent

The newly renovated physical therapy teaching clinic gives new grads a mentorship-rich first year treating complex patients — a "360 win" for grads, mentors, students and patients alike.

[Read the full story ➔](#)

Notable Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Grants



Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund

Experiential Learning Activity to Improve the Knowledge and Attitudes of Physiotherapy Students Toward People living with Dementia

Gabriela Abbud, Crystal MacLellan & Mark Hall

Shaping the Future of Health Education: AI-Enhanced Teaching and Practice

Eric Parent & Mark Hall



Co-operative Education & Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL) iHUB Grant

Reducing Barriers to Clinical Placements in Underserved Communities, supporting placement opportunities with Big Horn 144A.

Heather Bredy & Crystal MacLellan

Enhancing Access to Home Care Clinical Placements for Physiotherapy Students

Gabriela Abbud & Heather Bredy



Internal Teaching and Learning Grant

Advancing Menopause Care: Implementing an Interdisciplinary Wellness Program

Crystal MacLellan, Marguerite Wieler & colleagues

Examining the Development of Leadership Competencies Through Physical Therapy Clinical Placements: A Qualitative Study

Gabriela Abbud, Heather Bredy & colleagues

A Year of Discovery

**5**

National awards
& honours

**119**

Peer-reviewed
publications

**\$2.8M**

New research
funding

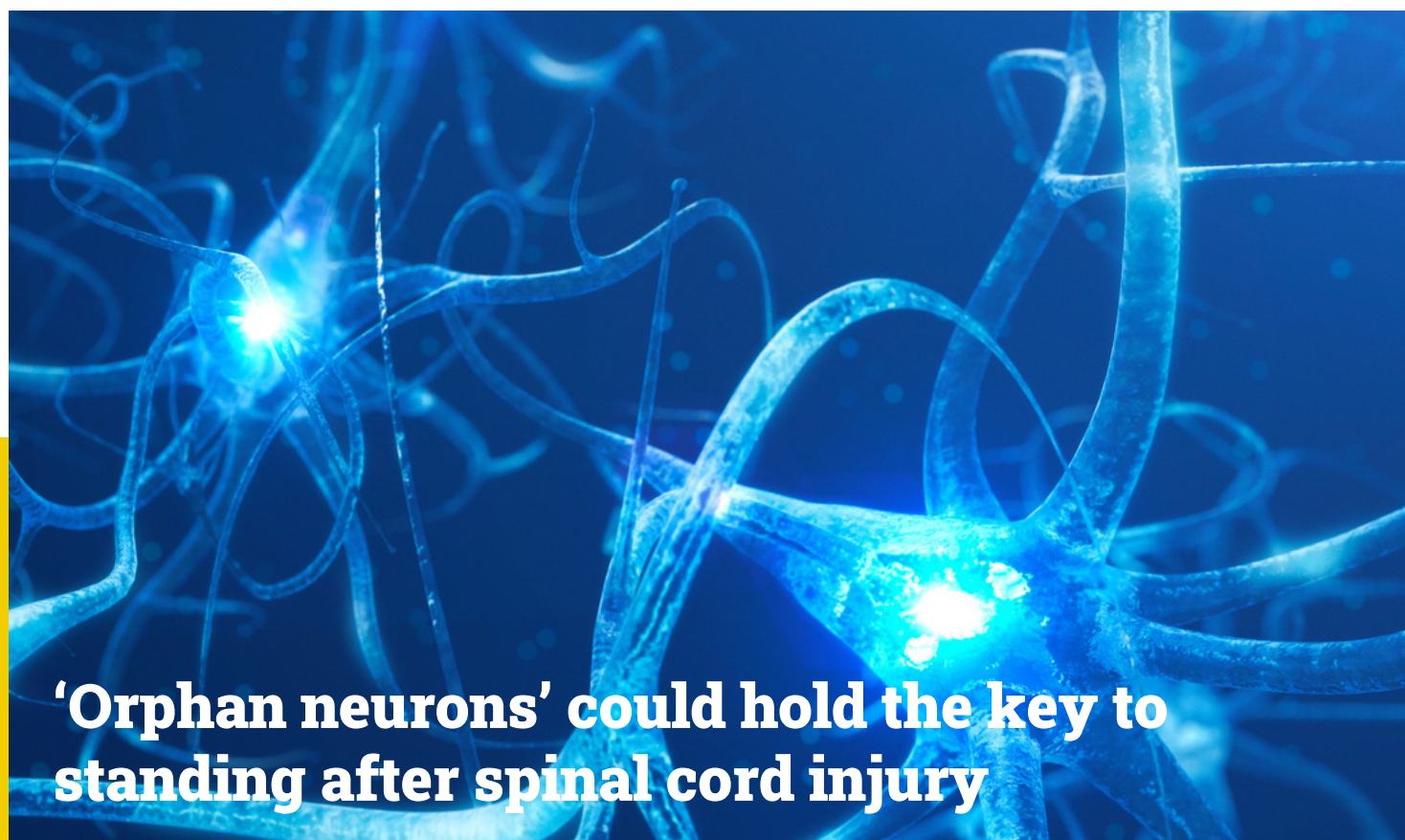
**5**

CIHR operating
grants

**21**

Projects supported
by donors

FEATURED STORY



‘Orphan neurons’ could hold the key to standing after spinal cord injury

Research team receives new funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for 23 life-changing projects.

[Read the full story →](#)

Notable Research Grants & Activities

FUNDING

CIHR Operating Grants

Erin McCabe (with Victor Ezeugwu and Caitlin Hurd)

Advancing Learning in Neurorehabilitation

Victor Ezeugwu (with Erin McCabe)

Behavioural Intervention and Guided Stepping Training Early Post-Stroke

Keith Fenrich

Spinal interneuron subpopulations in balance and stability control during locomotion before and after spinal cord injury

David Bennett

Neuronal circuits controlling standing and recovery from spinal cord injury

Karim Fouad

Chase Biotherapeutics: local delivery, global benefits in the central nervous system

Additional Funding & Initiatives

Allyson Jones

Connecting Voices, Bridging Care: A Virtual Knowledge Mobilization Initiative for Underserved People Living with Rheumatoid Arthritis

Martin Ferguson-Pell

Received 2 Alberta Innovates/Glenrose Hospital Foundation Creating the Future of Rehabilitation Care grants

Margie McNeely

Kipness Health Research Academy supporting Lymphedema Research + Training Program

FEATURED STORY

Margaret McNeely of the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine will lead the new Kipnes Institute's Lymphedema Research and Training Program, training health professionals to deliver evidence-based care for the more than a million Canadians living with the condition.

[Read the full story →](#)

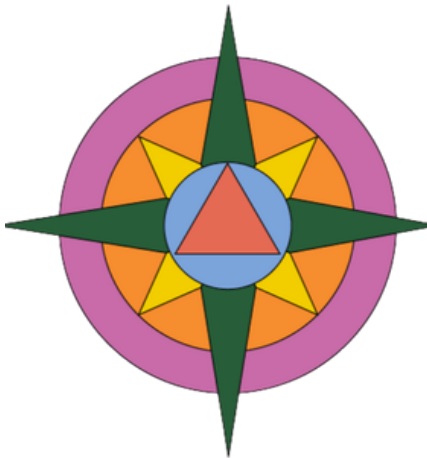


Department Highlights

The department hosted its second Physical Therapy Legacy Event on September 18, 2025, featuring presentations by Judy Chepeha and David Magee. The evening also marked the announcement of the **Dr. Judy Chepeha Physical Therapy Endowment for Mental Health and Wellbeing**, created to support student wellness for years to come.

On April 9, 2026, we celebrated the grand opening of the MSK & Sports Therapy Teaching Clinic. Staff, students, alumni and community members filled the space for an evening of guest speakers, clinic tours and an admissions presentation.

The Augustana accreditation site visit took place May 4–5, 2026. The visit went smoothly, reviewers' preliminary feedback was positive, and the formal report is forthcoming.



Art by Tashina Makokis

Our new Strategic Compass sets the department's direction for 2026–2030

Its vision: to advance physical therapy through accountable leadership, transformative education and community-driven research, sustained by a resilient and inclusive professional community.

[Read the full report →](#)



FEATURED STORY

The Next Chapter of Care

Longtime physical therapy professor David Magee is honouring his former student Judy Chepeha with a new endowment in her name, supporting the mental health and wellbeing of physical therapy students — carrying forward the compassionate mentorship she was known for.

[Read the full story →](#)

Program Highlights

- All students successfully completed their clinical placements.
- Offers to the incoming cohort starting in August have been made and all positions are accepted. We will enrol 129 students, including an **expanded group of 20 at the Augustana satellite**.
- **Curriculum mapping** and a review of PT electives are underway under Gabriela Abbud's leadership.
- The expanded teaching clinic model in Edmonton is going well, with service volume increasing under the leadership of Matt Goertzen and Heather Bredy (operations and academic leads). We have also begun discussions with SAIT about partnering on a **cardiorespiratory rehabilitation teaching clinic** in Calgary.
- **The Rural Health Hub** in Camrose is scheduled to open summer 2026. Daniel Gillespie, Chris Zarski, Brandyn Powelske, Heather Bredy and Mark Hall have been preparing the space, equipment and programming for this new interdisciplinary teaching clinic.
- The teaching clinic team received a **2026 University of Alberta Campus Sustainability Grant** to evaluate our teaching clinics against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The team will develop metrics and share tailored recommendations to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.



“ We felt like pioneers. Physiotherapy was still finding its place.

— Elaine Roberts, Class of 1956

Awards & Honours

Lauren Beaupre

Alberta Medical Association Medal of Honour

Recognized for outstanding contributions to Albertans through research and health care.

Karim Fouad

2025 National Institute of Neurological Disorders & Stroke Director's Award

Recognized for leadership in the Neurotrauma Common Data Elements initiative.

Geoff Bostick

2025 McCalla Professorship

One of the U of A's top teaching honours. [Read more in The QUAD →](#)

Eric Parent

Innovative Teaching Award

Recognized for creative and effective approaches to teaching in the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Caitlin Hurd

Rehabilitation Medicine Students Association Teaching Award

A student-selected honour recognizing excellence in teaching.

NSD-PFC Grant Award for Physiotherapy Research in Neurosciences

Recognizing outstanding research that advances understanding of the nervous system and improves patient outcomes.



Allyson Jones was appointed to the **Advisory Board for CIHR's Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (IMHA)**, where she will help shape the institute's national research priorities.

Community members are encouraged to connect with Allyson at cajones@ualberta.ca to share ideas or concerns they would like brought forward to the Advisory Board, or to learn more about IMHA's strategic direction under its new scientific director, Dr. Rae Yeung.

Team Updates



FOND FAREWELLS

After decades of dedicated service to the department, **Berni Martin** retired in August 2025 and **Jaynie Yang** in June 2026. Both will be missed, and their retirement celebrations drew many friends and colleagues. The department also said goodbye to **Kate Pilgrim**, who departed to pursue an OT program — congratulations, Kate! Recruitment for her replacement is underway.



A NEW LEADERSHIP MODEL

This year saw the launch of a new distributed leadership model, with Geoff Bostick stepping into the role of Program Director, Gabriela Abbud as Curriculum Lead and Heather Bredy as Clinical Education Lead. Special thanks to Crystal MacLennan, whose diligent leadership as Program Director guided the program until Dec. 31, 2025.



GROWING AND ADVANCING

Caitlin Hurd was the successful candidate in the department's tenure-track hiring competition and began as an Assistant Professor on June 1, 2026. **Trish Manns** was promoted to vice-provost (Programs) and **Jacky Chow** to full Teaching Professor, both effective July 1, 2026.



CHANGES ON THE SUPPORT TEAM

Katelyn Brown has been seconded for one year as Manager of Academic Services, with **Sheila Gu** stepping into her role during that time. **Crishal Subaran** joined as program assistant and clinic PTA, becoming part of the organized and efficient department support team led by **Lana Vandenberghe**.

SHAPED BY PT

Stephanie Hovdestad, MScPT, 2026 Grad

“One of my favourite memories was during Thursday Night Pong, when Mark and Doug unexpectedly walked out in full leisure wear. It completely caught everyone off guard and had the whole room laughing. **Moments like that captured what made the program special — it's a demanding program, but with a great sense of community and humour.**

Andrew Smith, MScPT

“Something Professor Goertzen told us really stuck with me: being a health-care professional means you have a duty to be a good person. **That's shaped how I approach my practice every day.**

Indigenous Initiatives & Community Outreach

We are committed to building respectful relationships, meaningful partnerships and opportunities that support Indigenous communities and students.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



I've heard enough to know that staying quiet doesn't help anyone.

Andrew Smith

First-year MScPT Student

Andrew is a white-passing Indigenous student who is increasingly open about an identity he once hesitated to claim.

That shift is shaping his views on the role of representation in health care, his hopes for an Indigenous student association within the faculty and his plans to practise physical therapy near his family's territory outside Whitehorse. [Read Andrew's story →](#)



Strengthening Community Connections

Continued outreach and relationship building with Indigenous communities and First Nations, including career fairs and events at Saddle Lake, O'Chiese, Paul, Enoch and Maskwacis.

Allyson Jones continued her work with the Indigenous Wellness Clinic and contributed to an international project, *Enhancing Physical Therapy Clinical Care for Indigenous Peoples' Musculoskeletal Health*. [Explore Allyson's work →](#)

The department and students participated in the 2025 National Gathering of Elders and the 2026 Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization conference.

Hosted a successful job fair in Edmonton and Calgary on June 18 and 19, 2026.

Hundreds of clinical placements and experiential learning opportunities are made possible through our partnerships with the physical therapy community. We are grateful to the physical therapists who mentor and inspire the next generation.

Student Spotlights



Stephanie Elanik

Inuvialuit graduate Stephanie Elanik (MScPT '26) turned her own patient journey in Yellowknife into a physiotherapy career — co-leading an Indigenous curriculum audit to strengthen cultural safety in the program before returning home to practise in the community that shaped her.

anne drew potter

Former figurative sculptor anne drew potter (MScPT '26) traded the studio for the clinic, transforming a lifelong fascination with the human body into a physical therapy career — a three-year journey they'll celebrate at convocation alongside their mother and two children.



Stephanie Hovdestad

Pandas Rugby athlete Stephanie Hovdestad (MScPT '26) turned her own injury rehabilitation into career inspiration, balancing varsity sport with her studies before stepping into her new role as a physiotherapy officer with the Canadian Armed Forces.

Leading with Purpose.



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**Department of Physical Therapy
Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine**

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