

Winter 2021-22

Beyond

Alumni/ae of Touro University Nevada



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Congratulations Class of 2021!

We are thrilled to welcome you as Touro University Nevada's newest alumni/ae. Your strength and resilience on your journey to becoming the next generation of physicians, healthcare providers, and educators has led you to this exciting moment.

Remember that your journey does not end here at Touro. In fact, it is only just beginning.

Congratulations!

WELCOME

Dear Touro alumni/ae,

I hope you are all doing well and staying safe as we continue to weather the storm against the Omicron variant.

Thanks to virtual learning for all didactic students and carefully planned in-person labs, we have continued to provide our students with the tools they need to receive a quality education in a safe environment.

In addition to completing their rigorous studies, I am encouraged by our students unwavering commitment to working on the frontlines during this pandemic. Our students have administered thousands of free COVID-19 tests and vaccines and continue to provide free healthcare services to our most vulnerable populations within the Southern Nevada community.

Knowing that our students are working to save lives during this once-in-a-century pandemic makes me incredibly proud. As alumni/ae of this institution, I hope you are proud as well.

I am grateful for the impact that you have all made within your communities during this pandemic. In our first issue of Beyond, it was inspiring to see countless Touro alumni/ae from across the country making a difference during COVID-19. We received updates from alumni/ae representing 12 states, showing that Touro University Nevada is making an impact throughout the U.S.

I encourage you to stay connected with your alma mater. When you read the stories in this issue of Beyond, think about how Touro helped make you the person and professional you are today. I hope you are as proud of us as we are of you.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Shelley Berkley'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Shelley Berkley
CEO and Senior Provost
Touro University Western Division

WELCOME



Veronica R. Fischer
Director of
Donor Engagement and
Alumni/ae Relations

I am so excited to be sharing with you the second edition of our alumni/ae magazine, Beyond!

This publication was created with you in mind: your achievements, your successes, your stories. Over the past few years, I have met so many of our amazing TUN alumni/ae and have heard about the incredible impact that you are making in your communities. From academic leadership to working on the frontline during the pandemic; opening your own practices to mentoring the next generation of healthcare leaders. I am genuinely and truly so proud of each of you.

I am also excited that this magazine gives us the opportunity to fulfill that promise we made to you at graduation: to keep you informed about the university and what we are doing to make our community a better place. Since our last edition, we have partnered with multiple organizations to continue our vaccination efforts across the Valley (including Allegiant Stadium with the Las Vegas Raiders), began the important work of launching a mobile prenatal clinic to reach underserved communities across the Valley, expanded our building to better meet the growing research and educational needs of our current students, and so much more.

I hope that when you hear your alma mater in the news or mentioned around your professional circles, you are as proud to be part of the TUN family as we are of you. As you page through this magazine, I trust you will be reminded of some wonderful memories, and perhaps you will make a connection that will help grow some new ones.

Hands down, the best part of my job is hearing from our alumni/ae about what has happened in their lives since graduation, and I hope you all know that I am always available to connect with you and would love to do so! Anytime you are in town, stop by campus for a tour and to catch up. I would love to show you all of the changes we've made and bring you up to speed on all we've been doing.

As always, take care and stay safe.

Touro Receives \$5,000 Gift from Cox Communications to Expand Diversity Programming

By **Steven Slivka**

Photo by *Mona Shield-Payne*

Touro University Nevada received a generous \$5,000 gift from Cox Communications to help expand its diversity, equity, and inclusion programming.

In the wake of George Floyd's murder in the Summer of 2020, several Touro students brought forward the idea of forming a new committee to highlight the inequities plaguing the country's social and healthcare systems.

Craig Stevens, Cox Communication's Senior Director of Government Affairs, commended Touro for its current efforts to increase diversity programming among its campus community. It was a major reason for Cox making this donation, he added.

"At Cox, we believe in equity and justice for everyone, and Touro's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion aligns perfectly with that," Stevens said.

Shivani Venkatesh, a second-year student in the College of Osteopathic Medicine and a member of the Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI), was on hand for the check presentation. She said having more diversity is critical, especially when it comes to representation in healthcare.

"I think it's important for patients to see providers who look like them," she said. "Through CDEI, we've been able to plan events to help increase representation among students in healthcare."

"I believe this gift can provide more resources to help other students and bring more awareness around Touro to build on the initiatives we're doing across campus," said Elijah Boston, a student in the School of Occupational Therapy and a co-founder of Touro Nevada Stands for Justice. "I love that Touro has taken a stand in acknowledging that there is a need."

In addition to providing a \$5,000 donation to Touro, Cox has partnered with UNLV and the College of Southern Nevada for their commitments to diversity programming. Stevens said this is a fight for everyone, and he is encouraged by the collaboration across the Las Vegas Valley.

"To truly get us to a fair and just society, this has to be a group effort," Stevens said. "The goal is to have equality ingrained in our minds, so we wake up every morning and know to be kind to one another. That's what we hope to accomplish through these partnerships."



Touro's students and staff receive a \$5,000 from Cox Communications during Diversity Week. Back row from left: Oscar Escudero, Chair of Touro's Committee for Diversity Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI); Elijah Boston, Occupational Therapy Doctorate student and CDEI member; Craig Stevens, Cox Communications Senior Director of Government Affairs. Front row from left: Shivani Venkatesh, osteopathic medical student and CDEI member; Dena Potestio, Touro's Vice President for Advancement; Shelley Berkley, Touro's CEO & Senior Provost; Ellie Ok, osteopathic medical student

The 'Touro Stands for Justice' committee was formed shortly after, and its programming has grown tremendously over the last year-and-a-half. The success of the committee eventually lead to the creation of the Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI), a campus-wide committee focused on supporting and promoting the institution's value of social justice.

T Touro University Nevada
Here for you, **wherever you are.**

VOLUNTEER

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Nearly 800 Students Receive Their White Coats For the First Time

By Steven Slivka

Photos by Mona Shield-Payne

For the first time since 2019, Touro University Nevada's first-and second-year students were presented with their white coats during two separate in-person ceremonies in October.

Held inside the Thomas & Mack Center, more than 430 students from the College of Health and Human Services and more than 350 first-and-second-year students from the College of Osteopathic Medicine donned their white coats for the first time with their friends and families in attendance.

Students from the Schools of Physician Assistant Studies, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Nursing received their white coats on Oct. 3, while students from the College of Osteopathic Medicine received theirs on Oct. 4.

“Our entire first year was virtual, so we hadn't had the opportunity to interact with our classmates. Being here for our white coat ceremony feels amazing.”

- Sandeep Rai

College of Osteopathic Medicine, Class of 2024



“My white coat means a lot to me. It represents the number of responsibilities that I will shoulder as a healthcare provider. I love that it's white because it represents a clean slate.”

- Viet Nguyen

School of Physician Assistant Studies, Class of 2023



“I think this shows me how much I've achieved in my life. It shows that I can genuinely help people. The white coat will always be on me, whether it's visible or invisible.”

- Christina Harvey

School of Physical Therapy, Class of 2024

PA Alumna

Named Interim Director of School of Physician Assistant Studies

Amie Duford, PA-C, a 2008 graduate, is leading the PA Program into the future

By Steven Slivka

Photos by Mona Shield-Payne



Amie Duford is seeing it all come full circle.

Nearly 15 years after being one of the first students to graduate from Touro's School of Physician Assistant Studies, Duford was named the program's Interim Director over the Summer.

After taking a chance on Touro's new PA Program in 2005, Duford is now leading it into the future.

But the path wasn't always so smooth for the Vermont-born, Utah-raised Duford. In fact, the path to becoming a physician assistant wasn't even a certainty when she moved to Las Vegas 20 years ago.

After graduating from Utah State University with her baccalaureate degree in Exercise Physiology and later her Master's degree in Parks and Recreation from the Univ. of Utah, Duford worked long hours at a well-known hospital in Utah until deciding to move to Southern Nevada with friends.

Duford only planned to live in Southern Nevada for six months after relocating with her girlfriends, but she grew to love the community. While working at Nordstrom's and waiting tables, she continued to pursue her PA aspirations by also working at local hospitals to strengthen her application.

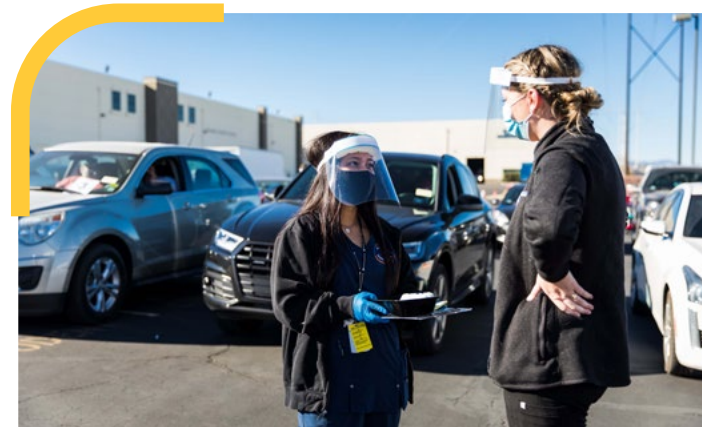
"When I decided to work toward becoming a PA, I looked at all of the programs across the U.S.," she remembered.

"I asked myself, 'Could I live there?' And if so, 'Can I meet their requirements?' If the answer was yes to both, I was applying. I knew how competitive it was and knew that I needed to work very hard to get in and succeed."

As more time went by, Duford began to question if the PA route was still for her. Then one day, while working as a server at a restaurant near UNLV, she struck up a conversation with a customer who also happened to work as an orthopedic surgeon in town.

She told him about her waning hopes of PA school, and he encouraged her to stay the course. It was the encouragement she needed to remind her about what she was meant to do in life.

"That interaction changed everything for me," she recalled. "I eventually worked with him in the operating room and got some much-needed medical back-office experience. I worked in his office during the day and waited tables at night."



Amie Duford speaks with a student during one of Touro's COVID-19 mass vaccination events

With the critical, medical experience under her belt, Duford decided to take a tour of the new Touro University Nevada campus, which opened the year before. She was nervous about applying to a new PA program, but meeting the people on campus, including founding director Vicki Padgett, helped put her mind at ease.

"After being in Las Vegas for a few years, falling in love with Southern Nevada, and learning more about the Touro community they were building, it made me comfortable and calming in my decision," she said. "I felt like they were taking a chance on me as much as I was taking a chance on them."

After graduating as a member of the PA Program's second class in 2008, Duford worked as a PA in the Las Vegas Valley. In 2013, she came back to her alma mater as the Director of Student Health and in 2016, became a full-time faculty member in the School of Physician Assistant Studies.

Since returning as faculty, Duford has emphasized the importance of primary care to her students.

"Our profession was founded on filling the gaps in healthcare. Even though PAs go into different specialties, there is a strong focus on primary care," she said. "We need a primary care workforce to take charge and ensure that we are meeting our patients' needs."

In 2017, the School of Physician Assistant Studies was awarded with a \$1 million federal grant from the Health Resources and Human Services Administration (HRSA) for faculty development research to improve healthcare for disadvantaged populations.

"I quickly thought about Amie because of her efforts with our mobile health clinic and our clinic at The Shade Tree," said Dr. Phil Tobin, the PA Program's Director at the time. "Outreach is a huge focus of the PA program, and the clinics are a huge draw for students who are looking to come to Touro."

Tobin credited Duford for establishing partnerships with several organizations who assist those in underserved communities. Currently, Touro's PA students use the Mobile Healthcare Clinic to provide free primary care services at numerous organizations throughout the Las Vegas Valley, thanks in large part to Duford's vision for addressing the primary care gap in Southern Nevada.

"My hope is that with these experiences, our students will learn compassion, meet their patients where they are, and continue to understand how our patients' life experiences play a role in their healthcare," she said. "I want to continue that legacy of outreach and giving back."



In June, Duford was named Interim Director of the School of Physician Assistant Studies after Tobin took a position as the new PA Program Director at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Florida.

"I'm so very proud of the program that Vicki built and seeing Dr. Tobin continue that legacy," she said. "I'm hoping to continue that same legacy and train our PAs to become superstars. I want to keep growing and learning professionally, and I want to instill the importance of showing compassion and empathy in my students."

Thanks to a multi-year expansion, Duford will lead three classes of 80 students as Director. She laughed when she thought about her graduating class, which only had 32 students.

Over the years, she's learned to make the best of each situation. It's hard for her to imagine where she is now when she thinks about where she was 20 years ago; moving to Las Vegas on a whim.

"We never know what life has in store for us. We can have the most thought-out plan and timeline and it just doesn't work out. COVID has really taught us that," she said. "Life is going to happen when it's meant to happen. You just have to be prepared to seize the opportunities that are put in front of you."

Dr. Ted Kurlinkus's Touro Experience

Has Given Him the Teaching Bug

Illinois-raised alumnus teaches in Chicago but stays connected to his alma mater out West

By Steven Slivka



Growing up in Roscoe, Ill., two hours from Chicago near the Wisconsin border, Dr. Ted Kurlinkus never imagined he'd attend physical therapy school 25 hours away in Henderson, Nevada.

But after finishing his undergraduate studies at the Univ. of Illinois, that's exactly what happened.

"I was looking at a few bigger schools, but I really wanted that smaller, more personal experience," Kurlinkus recalled. "I grew up in a small town and wanted to keep that community feel when it came to PT school. I didn't know much about Touro University Nevada or Henderson before I applied, but I wanted a new experience in a part of the country I wasn't used to. It was one of the best decisions I ever made."

Like many physical therapists, Kurlinkus had an athletic background as a kid. He mostly played soccer growing up and knew from the time he started PT school that he would work in sports after he graduated.

After graduating in 2015, Kurlinkus did an orthopedic residency at the Univ. of Wisconsin and a Manual Therapy Fellowship at the Univ. of Illinois. He currently works as the team physical therapist at DePaul University in Chicago where he works primarily with the men's and women's soccer teams.

Kurlinkus loves the relationship he's built with the soccer teams, though he's also been bitten by the teaching bug.

"Having great professors at Touro really inspired me to get into teaching," he admitted. "Dr. [Steve] Liaos had a big influence on the direction of my career when I was at Touro. I really enjoy the idea of being that for someone else and having that degree of influence on someone's career."

In addition to serving as DePaul's team PT, Kurlinkus teaches in the Manual Therapy Fellowship program at Northwestern University. He said teaching offers a healthy balance so he can divide his time between the classroom and the clinic.

He stays close to Touro by keeping in touch with a few of his old classmates from PT school. They've attended each other's weddings and continue to lean on each other for professional advice in the clinic.

He also serves on alumni/ae panels for new students going through the admissions process.

"I've been able to teach prospective students about how great the school is. Touro has made a positive impact on what my life has become, and I hope to pass that on to them," he said. "More people are familiar with Touro now than they were when I was a student, which is great. I love seeing more alumni/ae involved in teaching and mentoring. It's making a bigger impact in the PT community and the Henderson community."

School of Nursing Alumna Uses DNP to Help Educate Future Generations of Nurses

Dr. Alice Martanegara wants current nurses to mentor nurses of tomorrow

By Steven Slivka



As the State Director of Nursing for Western Governors University in Southern California, Dr. Alice Martanegara was looking for a Doctor of Nursing Program (DNP) that provided her with an educational leadership component.

She found it in the Touro University Nevada School of Nursing.

"I loved the flexibility of Touro's DNP program because I really needed the online modality due to my crazy, busy life," she recalled. "The educational leadership focus fit my background perfectly. The program gave me everything I wanted."

The year was 2014, and in her role as State Director, Martanegara was working with hospital systems, legislators, and nursing leadership groups. Touro's online program was critical to her needs.

"When I started the DNP program, it was more seamless than my master's program," she admitted. "The support system was wonderful. From the education to the communication and everything in between, I could not have asked for a better experience."

Martanegara was hired, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the new Associate Dean for the Nursing Program at Golden West College in Huntington Beach, Calif.

She teaches both in the MSN and DNP programs and emphasizes the importance of working closely with the community to serve their patients the best they can. As nurses, she said, we need to understand the different social determinants because that's what the future of nursing is.

Since graduating from Touro's DNP Program in 2015, Martanegara's passion for caring for the underserved has only grown more intense.

"We need to be able to educate nurses and be more conscious of our own biases," she said. "COVID, unfortunately, brought plenty of bias out and pushed everything to the forefront. The color of the blood is the same, regardless of who you are or where you are in life."

Martanegara is pondering her future in retirement. She hadn't anticipated accepting her current position as Associate Dean, but the inequities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic reminded her that there is still more work to be done.

As a Touro alumna, she hopes more nurses from her alma mater will continue to mentor the future generations of nurses. It's one of the reasons she chose to pursue her DNP.

“At the end of the day, you want to be a mentor, because everybody needs one.”

**- Dr. Alice Martanegara
Doctor of Nursing Program, Class of 2015**

Newest Alumni/ae Celebrate Their Commencements with Friends and Family in Attendance

By Steven Slivka

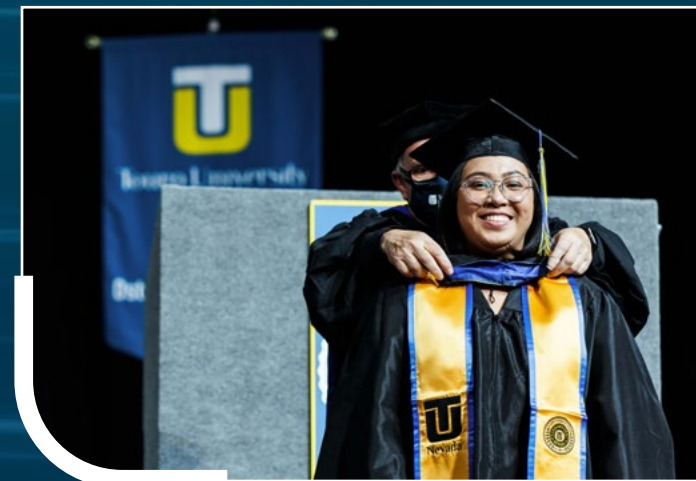
Photos by Mona Shield-Payne

The Spring and Winter Commencements were the first graduation ceremonies Touro was able to hold in-person since 2019.

Spring Commencement saw two separate ceremonies for Touro's newest alumni/ae at the Thomas & Mack Center: one ceremony for graduates from the Schools of Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Nursing, and Education Classes of 2020 and 2021; the other for new graduates from the College of Osteopathic Medicine and the Master's of Science in Medical Health Sciences Program (MHS).

Winter Commencement, held at The Smith Center for the Performing Arts, saw the newest graduates from the School of Physician Assistant Studies, the School of Nursing, and the School of Education.

Nearly 700 new Touro alumni/ae from the Classes of 2020 and 2021 celebrated their special moment during their ceremonies.



As Radiology Evolves, Dr. Travis Snyder is Helping Touro's Medical Students Lead the Way

2009 College of Osteopathic Medicine graduate hopes to inspire medical students in fun and challenging field

| By Steven Slivka



Dr. Travis Snyder is doing his best to educate Touro's medical students on the importance, and fun, of working in Radiology.

After graduating from Touro's College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2009, Snyder spent five years doing a Radiology residency at Michigan State University before completing a one-year Neuroradiology fellowship at the University of Miami, where he studied myriad neurological cases from patients around the world.

In 2015, the Pennsylvania native returned to Southern Nevada to work with the late Dr. William Orrison, the physician who inspired him to pursue radiology when he was a rotating medical student.

"Dr. Orrison reached out and offered me a radiology partnership, which is pretty rare, and I had to take him up on it," Snyder said upon returning to work with his mentor. "I had already lived in Southern Nevada and grew to love the community, so I knew it was the right decision for me."

Snyder currently practices at SimonMed Imaging in Las Vegas and serves as an adjunct faculty member of Radiology and Neuroradiology at Touro.

In addition to teaching Touro's medical students in the classroom, Snyder has offered research projects and internships to 60 students each year from his alma mater each Summer.

He understands the impact Dr. Orrison had on him during medical school and hopes to inspire today's medical students to pursue Radiology as a specialty.

"Radiology isn't for everyone, but every case is a puzzle and there's just so much to learn," Snyder said. "Every day, we're looking up articles and discovering things we didn't know before. I love to see the students get inspired by it all."

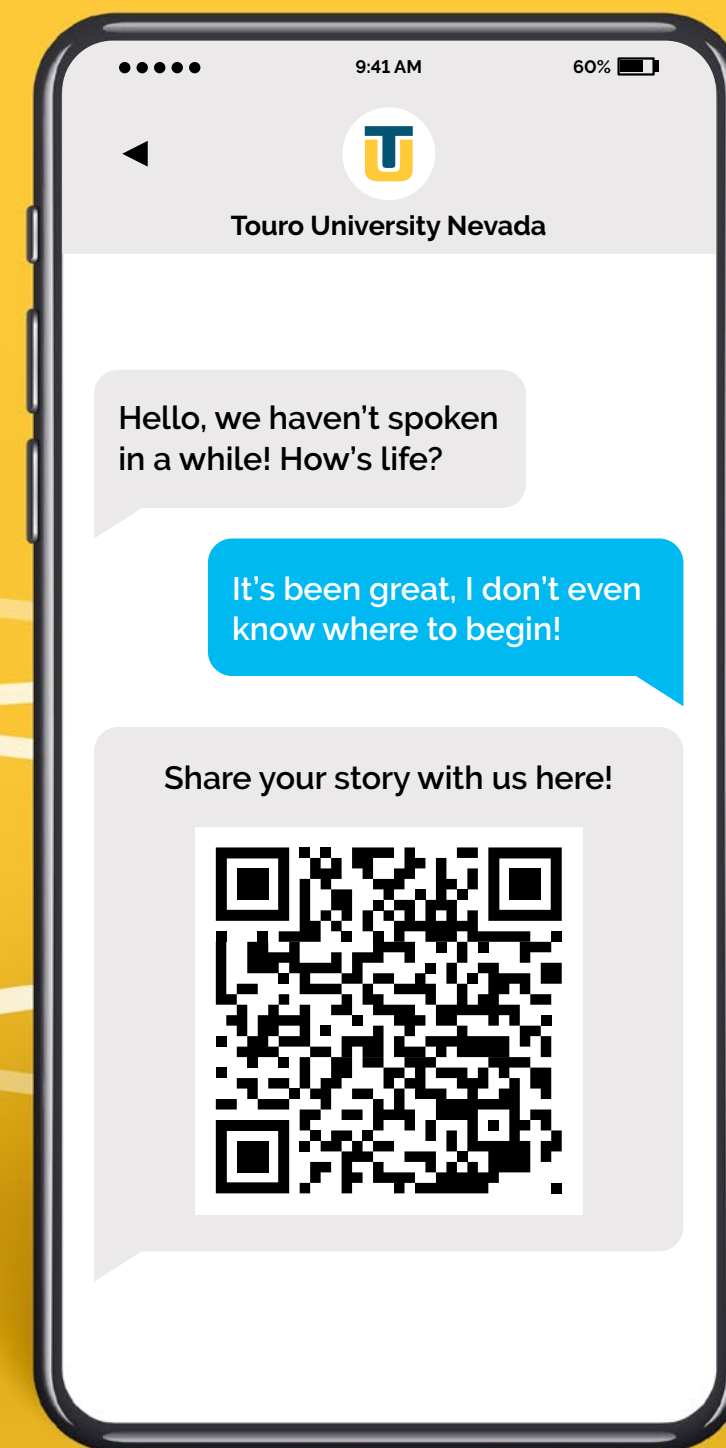
At SimonMed, Snyder and his students have created an expansive database on traumatic brain injuries (TBIs), which has led to significant research on how to better treat TBIs going forward.

He is also the program director for the first and only Radiology residency in the state of Nevada. One of the things he enjoys most, he said, is taking students on rotations and watching them become more involved in the imaging process for themselves; not just watching him do it.

He sees himself in some of the students he works with, a similar experience to the one he had as a Touro student.

"We have some really talented students who rotate with us and it's great to see them get inspired by their experience," Snyder said. "That's the most rewarding part for me."

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