



physician assistant SPOTLIGHT

For alumni and friends of the
University of Wisconsin–Madison Physician Assistant Program

WINTER 2016

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Keep in Touch!

University of Wisconsin–Madison
Physician Assistant Program
Health Sciences Learning Center
750 Highland Avenue, Room 1278
Madison, WI 53705
Phone: (608) 263-5620
Toll-free: (800) 442-6698
Email: paprogram@wisc.edu
www.physicianassistant.wisc.edu

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The Paths of Service

For first-year UW–Madison Physician Assistant (PA) Program student Miranda Zuhlke, big things begin on January 29.

She chose that date in 2015 to interview for admission to the PA Program—the place, she says, “where I was meant to be.”

On that same date 13 years before, she enlisted in the National Guard, a step that took her on a life-changing tour of duty to Iraq.

Superstitious? Perhaps. Auspicious? Definitely. Because January 29 not only symbolizes two major turning points in Miranda's life, but also her unwavering commitment to hard work, leadership and service.

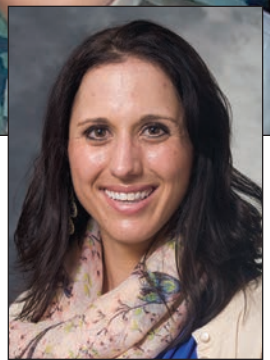
Called To Duty

Miranda grew up in rural Gratiot, Wisconsin. Her interest in health care led her to complete a nursing assistant certification while still in high school.

On January 29, 2002, at the age of 17, she enlisted in the Army National Guard 1158th Transportation Unit. The September 11 attacks had recently happened, and by August of 2002, she was called to active duty training.



Above: Miranda in Iraq.



Right: Miranda at the PA Program in 2015.

Two years later, her unit was deployed overseas. At age 19, Miranda was driving an M1070 HET (heavy equipment transporter) in Iraq, where she'd serve for the next 14 months.

Story continues on page 3

Reaccredited for 10 Years with No Citations!

In September 2015, the PA Program received continued accreditation for the next 10 years—with no citations—by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant. A successful review gives students and the public increased confidence in the value of our program.

“We are extremely proud of the program’s re-accreditation, especially that we were found to meet or exceed all accreditation standards,” said Program Director Virginia Snyder, PhD, PA-C.

“It speaks highly to the fact that we have an infrastructure of continuous self-assessment and self-improvement. Accreditation requires an inordinate investment for everyone in the program, and the exceptional result is testament to our team’s hard work and our program’s strength.”

Last Chance to Apply for MPAS Completion

We are accepting applications for our Master’s Degree Completion Program. This is the last time we will offer this one-year, online program, which focuses on content added to our curriculum as it transitioned to a master’s degree program.

You must be a UW–Madison PA Program baccalaureate graduate to apply.

Apply by **March 1, 2016**, for the class that starts in the fall of 2016. To learn more, visit our website or email Honorie Coté, MS, PA-C, at hocote@wisc.edu.

Two New Faculty Join Us in January



***Amy Parins, MPAS, PA-C**, teaches in the Clinical Medicine, Diagnostic Methods and Population Health courses and Clinical Skills Labs, and helps students coordinate their Path of Distinction. A 2008 UW–Madison PA Program graduate, Amy has clinical experience in cardiology, orthopedics, rheumatology and internal medicine. She practices in internal medicine at UW Health and has interests in behavioral health, women’s health, global health, and integrative medicine.*



***Alissa DeVos, MPAS, PA-C**, teaches in the Fundamentals of Surgery course and Clinical Skills Labs, contributes to other courses, and helps students coordinate their Path of Distinction. A 2010 UW–Madison PA Program graduate, Alissa returned in 2014 to earn an MPAS through our Master’s Degree Completion Program. She is a practicing PA in trauma and acute care surgery at Mercy Hospital and Trauma Center in Janesville, Wisconsin.*

Seaborne Wins UW Health Award

Congratulations to Lori Seaborne, MPAS, PA-C, a graduate of our MPAS program and a PA in general surgery at the UW Health Breast Center, for receiving a 2015 UW Health Advanced Practice Provider (APP) Excellence Award.

The award recognizes UW Health physician assistants and nurse practitioners for outstanding clinical practice, teaching and leadership.

Seaborne has been a regular lecturer on women’s health topics for the PA Program. She has also developed a novel Women’s Integrative Sexual Health Clinic, established a survivorship care plan for breast cancer patients as they transition their care, and authored content in breast cancer guidebooks for patients. Most recently, she published an article in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* assessing how PA programs nationwide included sexual health education in their curricula.



Above, from left: UW Health APP Director Rhonda Hoyer, NP; Lori Seaborne, MPAS, PA-C; UW Health Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer Peter Newcomer, MD; and Interim UW Health CEO Jeffrey Grossman, MD

Q&A: New Guest Lecturer Elizabeth Lucht, PA-C, LCSW



**Elizabeth Lucht,
PA-C, LCSW**

Beth was a clinical social worker for 17 years before entering the PA Program. She graduated in 2014, and now practices at Group Health Cooperative in Madison, where she works in mental health and urgent care.

Q: How did you start as a lecturer?

Amanda DeVoss, my former advisor, emailed me about helping with a lecture on mental status exams. I had worked in a suicide prevention unit as a social worker, so I asked to also

include training on suicide assessment. It's something I know a lot about and feel strongly about.

A lot of PA Program grads are not going to be mental health clinicians, but they are all going to see people who have risk factors for suicide, so it's important that they know how to do a good assessment.

Q: Does your background in social work impact your work as a PA?

I went to PA school with the idea that you never stop being a social worker. I tend to see patients holistically; I get a lot of context about what's going on in their lives. Are they worried about having enough food at home or keeping their apartment? What other psychosocial stressors are affecting them?

Q: What do you like about teaching?

Teaching helps me solidify my own knowledge base. It encourages me to think not only about how I do things but also why I do them.

"I went to PA school with the idea that you never stop being a social worker."

I've benefited from having really good teachers and I like to give back. I also learn from students' experiences and stories they share. And I think students like the opportunity to practice skills, especially when they're learning from a person who's a PA and who was sitting where they are just a couple of years before.

PATHS OF SERVICE (continued)

Learning to Lead

In Iraq, Miranda cross-trained as a combat lifesaver while serving in the transportation unit, where she also had the unforgettable experience of being a convoy commander.

"You never know what you're capable of until you're pushed," she recalled. "I didn't think I was ready to lead a group of soldiers...but you put the best interest of your people foremost and that guides your decisions."

Finding Her Home

Miranda returned home in December 2005—as a Staff Sergeant—and had to readjust to civilian life.

"Fourteen months is a long time in a heightened, stressful situation," she reflected. "Things become 'normal' again, but nothing has really been the same since."

Pressing on, she finished college, completed three IRONMAN triathlons, worked as a medical assistant at the UW Health Northeast Family Medical Center, and found perspective in a visit to the George Mark Children's House, a pediatric palliative care center in California.

"You never know what you're capable of until you're pushed."

After earning a bachelor's degree in kinesiology from UW-Madison and a master's degree in medical science from Mississippi College, Miranda's career goals came into focus.

Although she considered medical school, she realized after attending a PA Program information session that this was the place for her.

"Seeing the faculty here—the sincerity and compassion they had for this program and for the students—made my decision crystal clear," she said.



'Go Through the Tough Stuff'

Today, as president of her first-year class, Miranda often calls on her military experience to encourage and inspire her peers.

"I tell classmates that the academic work is rough, but you're going to shine when it's boots on the ground, when you're in the clinic," she laughed. "You have to go through the tough stuff to get to where you're supposed to be."



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 750 Highland Avenue, Room 1278
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