

# COMMENCEMENT CLASS OF 2020



ACHIEVING NEW HEIGHTS IN  
MEDICAL EDUCATION

# MISSION STATEMENT

---

Rocky Vista University  
provides quality healthcare education  
while inspiring students to serve with  
compassion, integrity, and excellence.



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT  
CLASS OF 2020 COMMENCEMENT  
FRIDAY, THIRTEENTH OF NOVEMBER  
TWO-THOUSAND TWENTY



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



To Rocky Vista University's PA Class of 2020,

This year's Commencement is dedicated to our students and faculty as they played, and continue to play, a significant role in the COVID-19 Pandemic. Not since 1918 has our country's medical professionals been challenged by such a far-reaching pandemic. It challenges us, as a graduate healthcare University, to insist on the most advanced educational technologies and curricular emphasis, while never forgetting our commitment to the healing power and the importance of body, mind, and spirit.

We are proud of the stellar performance and eagerness of the Class of 2020 to launch into their professional roles as practicing Physician Assistants. You came to RVU with a sense of purpose, a desire to make a difference, and today, I remind you that your journey is never complete. The faculty and staff have provided you with the tools for success and wish you every joy and happiness a life of service can bring.

Today is a day of gratitude: gratitude to your family, friends, and faculty—all of whom share in your pride and accomplishment.

To our graduates, the people that are not here are your future patients—the individuals and families you will be privileged to touch. The RVU philosophy encompasses compassion, caring, and expertise. Every day during this pandemic, we hear tragic stories of families devastated by not being with their loved ones at their hour of need; this sorrow will reside in their hearts and minds forever. It is for these families that you are becoming a PA today.

I am proud of each and every one of you—now your challenge is to also make RVU proud of you!

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clinton E. Adams, DO, FACHE". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Clinton E. Adams, DO, FACHE  
President and CEO, Rocky Vista University

# THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROFESSIONAL OATH

---

I pledge to perform the following duties with honor and dedication:

I will hold as my primary responsibility the health, safety, welfare, and dignity of all human beings.

I will uphold the tenets of patient autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.

I will recognize and promote the value of diversity.

I will treat all persons equally who seek my care.

I will hold in confidence the information shared in the course of practicing medicine.

I will assess my personal capabilities and limitations, striving to always improve my medical practice.

I will actively seek to expand my knowledge and skills, keeping abreast of advantages in medicine.

I will work with other members of the health care team to provide compassionate and effective care of patients.

I will use my knowledge and experience to contribute to an improved community.

I will respect my professional relationship with the Physicians and all other health care professionals.

I will share and expand knowledge within the profession.



# MASTER OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES INAUGURAL CLASS OF 2020

**MATTHEW BATZEL**  
Monument, Colorado

**GINA FISCHER**  
Woodacre, California

**MICHELLE ELIZABETH BECKER**  
Avon, Indiana

**ALEXANDRA RAE FOUTS**  
Lakewood, Colorado

**ADRIANNE BRYANT**  
Craig, Colorado

**BENJAMIN THOMAS GALLOWAY**  
Portland, Oregon

**MARK CHESLEY BUYS**  
Idaho Falls, Idaho

**ASHLEY MARIE HARDIN**  
Fruita, Colorado

**RANA NICOLE COLATRIANO**  
Cascade, Colorado

**ALISON RAY HART**  
Denver, Colorado

**ELIZABETH DAVIS CROW**  
Louisville, Colorado

**RACHAEL NICOLE LEE HEEREN**  
Westminster, Colorado

**ALEXANDRA EMILIA DANIEL**  
San Diego, California

**MARIA LYN HIPPI**  
Darby, Montana

**JORDAN PAUL EATOUGH**  
Provo, Utah

**DANIEL LEWIS JOHNSON**  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

**CHRISTAL LAUREN ERICKSON**  
LaPlata, Maryland

**JALAAL MALIK KHAN**  
High Point, North Carolina

**ASHLEY NICOLE FALCON**  
Glastonbury, Connecticut

**AMY JOANNE KNACKENDOFFEL**  
Grand Junction, Colorado

**STEPHEN CHRISTOPHER FIKE**  
Lawton, Oklahoma

**ALEX JAMES KOCH**  
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

# MASTER OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES INAUGURAL CLASS OF 2020

**SCOTT WILLIAM KRECH**  
Fort Collins, Colorado

**KELLE ANN RISSMILLER**  
Parker, Colorado

**JONATHAN THOMAS LALE**  
Fort Collins, Colorado

**KATHRYN ANNETTE RODRIGUES**  
Bakersfield, California

**AILEEN MENDOZA**  
Loveland, Colorado

**STEPHANIE ANNE SCHICK**  
Fort Collins, Colorado

**ANNA TRAM ANH NGUYEN**  
Denver, Colorado

**JENNIFER SKINNER**  
Aurora, Colorado

**JEREMY PHILIP PETZOLD**  
Millington, Michigan



Photo taken on August 28, 2018

# ACHIEVING NEW HEIGHTS EVERY DAY

## MATTHEW BATZEL

**Research:** Capstone Project: “*Public Awareness and Concern for the Detriments of Antibiotics*”. **Miscellaneous:** Received “Most Likely to Survive the Hunger Games” superlative (2019).

## MICHELLE BECKER

**Positions:** Vice President of American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA). **Volunteer:** Tutor. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Electronic Medical Record System’s Effect on Frequency of Cervical Cancer Screening*”. **Miscellaneous:** Participated in the first Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA) 2019 Challenge Bowl; 1st Place in 2019 Challenge Bowl (the Patellas)

## ADRIANNE BRYANT

**Positions:** State Chapter Student Representative for American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) (2019). **Volunteer:** Participant in Physician Assistant Learner (PAL) mentorship program. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Provider Attitudes Regarding Mindfulness Based Adjunct Therapy for Chronic Pain and Illness*”. **Miscellaneous:** First PA student to be spotlighted on the RVU website; had a baby and subsequently finished final exams with a newborn!

## MARK BUYS

**Research:** “*How periods of relapse and remission affect treatment compliance in patients with Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis*”. **Miscellaneous:** Received “Youngest at Heart” superlative (2019).

## RANA COLATRIANO

**Volunteer:** Volunteered with Abode Hospice, Douglas County Library, and Therapeutic Recreation at Parker Recreation Center for persons with disabilities. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Cardiovascular Disorder Prevalence in Commonly Sleep Deprived Careers*”.

## ELIZABETH CROW

**Honors:** PA President’s Award (2020). **Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fair. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Evaluations in Rocky Vista University’s Physician Assistant Class of 2020*”.

## ALEXANDRA DANIEL

**Research:** Capstone Project: “*Assessing Mental Health Status of Healthcare Providers During COVID-19*”.

## JORDAN EATOUGH

**Honors:** PA Compassion Award (2020); Service Award

(2019); 2020 International Association of Medical Science Educators (IAMSE) Student Travel Award; RVU Student Travel Grants. **Positions:** Vice President of Class Council; member of American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) and Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA). **Volunteer:** Helped establish Tier 4 Alternate Care Facility for COVID-19 patients; Medical Mission Trip to Ecuador (2019). **Research:** Co-presented “Student Panel: Preparing Healthcare Providers for the Future” at the IAMSE (2020). Capstone Project: “*Patient Preferences on Healthcare Communication*”. **Miscellaneous:** Established the Physician Assistant Learner (PAL) Mentorship Program, which pairs incoming PA students with current PA student mentors; had a baby in August 2020!

## CHRYSTAL ERICKSON

**Honors:** Leadership Pin (2019). **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Does Living in Close Proximity to Unconventional Gas Development Have a Negative Impact on Birth Outcomes: A Retrospective Cohort Study Comparing Birth Statistics of Colorado Counties With Active Hydraulic Fracturing*”.

## ASHLEY FALCON

**Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fairs. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Is health coaching focused on behavior change techniques correlated with lower A1c values in pre-diabetic and diabetic patients versus usual care?*”. **Miscellaneous:** Bilingual health coach with Iora Health; participant in Sim Connect; participated in MASH Camp.

## STEPHEN FIKE

**Research:** Capstone Project: “*COVID-19’s Effect on RVU’s DO and PA Students physical activity*”. **Miscellaneous:** Featured student on the RVU website.

## GINA FISCHER

**Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fair. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Perceived Healthcare Worker Stigma and HIV Viral Load in HIV-Positive Pregnant Women in the Opt4Mamas Study*”.

## ALEXANDRA FOUTS

**Positions:** Class Representative. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Parental Knowledge, Practices, and Opinions of Pediatric Liquid Medication*”. **Miscellaneous:** Established the Physician Assistant Learner (PAL) Mentorship Program, which pairs incoming PA students with current PA student mentors.

“Being a physician assistant means I am in a better position to advocate for those in need.”  
Ashley Falcon

## BENJAMIN GALLOWAY

**Positions:** Student Representative for Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA). **Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fair and Douglas County Library. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*How Has the Coronavirus Pandemic Changed the Way People Utilize the Healthcare System*”. **Miscellaneous:** Received “Person You Most Want to Be Stranded on an Island With” superlative (2019); received “Most Likely to Provide Essential Relief During a Crisis” superlative (2020); organized silent auction at CAPA conference, raising \$1,500 for the Colorado Children’s Make a Wish Foundation (2019).

## ASHLEY HARDIN

**Research:** Capstone Project: “*Prevalence of Exclusive Daytime Sleepiness Among Rocky Vista Students*”.

## ALISON HART

**Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fair. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*LVEF and Symptom Resolution Comparison in Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement vs Surgical Aortic Valve Replacement Procedures*”. **Miscellaneous:** Participated in the first Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA) Challenge Bowl; 1st Place in Challenge Bowl (the Patellas); helped deliver first baby of the decade in Torrington, Wyoming; featured student in the *Vista View*.

## RACHAEL HEEREN

**Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fair. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Comparison of Open-release and Thread-release surgical techniques for the treatment of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome*”.

## MARIA HIPP

**Honors:** PA Collaborative Award (2020); Ron Taylor Memorial Scholarship (2019). **Positions:** RVU American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) Student Chapter President (2018-2019). **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Comparison of Anxiety and Depression Indicators in Physician Assistant and Medical Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic*”. **Miscellaneous:** Featured student in the *Vista View*.

## DANIEL JOHNSON

**Positions:** Veterans Caucus Member of RVU American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA); member of Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA), Alaska Academy of Physician Assistants (AKAPA). **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Perceptions of Altitude Illness and Pre-Race Altitude-Related Symptom Management Strategies in Competitors of a High Altitude Ultramarathon*”.

## JALAAL KHAN

**Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fair. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*The Impact of Brief Mindfulness Exercises in Cancer Patients*”.

## AMY KNACKENDOFFEL

**Honors:** Program Director’s Award (2020); 2019 Congeniality Award; Leadership Pin (2019). **Positions:** Member of the Student Government Association (2019-2020); Class Council President. **Volunteer:** Served as COVID-19 contact tracer for San Miguel County; mentor for Class of 2021; volunteered at 9News Health Fair. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Education in Cholecystectomy Patients*”.

## ALEX KOCH

**Research:** Capstone Project: “*Alcoholics Anonymous – specific aspects of the program and their perceived level of importance to sustained sobriety*”. **Miscellaneous:** Received “Most Likely to Practice Alternative Medicine” superlative (2019).

## SCOTT KRECH

**Honors:** PA Excellence Award (2020). **Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fair. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Medication Cost Reduction Techniques and Utilization*”.

## JONATHAN LALE

**Positions:** Member of Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA). **Research:** “*Correlation of Knowledge of Diabetic Disease Process with Hemoglobin A1C Levels in Type 2 Diabetics*”. **Miscellaneous:** Graduate of the RVU Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences program.

## AILEEN MENDOZA

**Research:** Capstone Project: “*Educational Gaps in Under-served Populations Regarding Pap Smears*”.

## ANNA NGUYEN

**Honors:** 2019 Physician Assistant Program Scholarship. **Positions:** Representative for Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA). **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Case Report: Treatment of retinal detachment (RD) and secondary open angle glaucoma (OAG) in a 31 yo female with type III osteogenesis imperfecta (OI)*”. **Miscellaneous:** Organized silent auction at CAPA conference, raising \$1,500 for the Colorado Children’s Make a Wish Foundation (2019).

## JEREMY PETZOLD

**Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fair. **Research:** “*Awareness of myocardial infarction symptoms in diabetic population*”. **Miscellaneous:** Participated in the first Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA) Challenge Bowl; 1st Place in Challenge Bowl (the Patellas).

## KELLE RISSMILLER

**Research:** “*A Retrospective Case Study of Early Signs of Childhood Apraxia of Speech*”. **Miscellaneous:** Received “Most Likely to Brighten Your Day” superlative (2019).

## KATHRYN RODRIGUES

**Honors:** Featured in *GI Jobs* as a 2020 Honoree. **Positions:** PA Class Secretary; Student Representative for American

Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) (2018-2020); member of Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA). **Volunteer:** Volunteered at 9News Health Fair. **Research:** Capstone Project: “*Nutrition Counseling: Affordable and Accessible for Everyone*”. **Miscellaneous:** Established the Physician Assistant Learner (PAL) Mentorship Program, which pairs incoming PA students with current PA student mentors.

### STEPHANIE SCHICK

**Research:** Capstone Project: “*Barriers to Counseling on Urinary Incontinence and Kegels at Prenatal Visits*”. **Mis-**

**cellaneous:** Wrote article for *High Altitude Health* titled, “Stroke, High Altitude, and EPO”.

### JENNIFER SKINNER

**Research:** Capstone Project: “*Patients’ Attitudes Toward Using Dietary Supplements to Treat Chronic Pain Compared to NSAIDs and Opioids*”. **Miscellaneous:** Featured on the High Impact Physician podcast, in the episode titled, “A Story of Personal Transformation”.

## SHOWING GRATITUDE

### MICHELLE BECKER

The support of my entire family and friends. The time I have dedicated to becoming a PA has been greatly influenced by Grandfather.

### RANA COLATRIANO

Sarah Neguse: A wonderful teacher who kept us engaged and taught us new ways to think. I really loved attending her classes and appreciate all the work she put into the handouts she gave us. It truly did help us. I hope to be as knowledgeable of a PA as she is one day.

### JORDAN EATOUGH

My wife for being so patient and understanding of all the late nights spent studying and the many other sacrifices we’ve made to further our education.

Each of my preceptors for taking the time to help me learn and entrusting me with their patients.

My parents for teaching me to work hard and always being willing and available to proofread papers, talk to, help, and support me in all that I do.

My classmates for being such a strong support system and becoming like family for me and my wife as we have been far from our actual families. Thanks for the study groups, laughs, and great memories!

### ASHLEY FALCON

I would like to thank my father, Franco, for always being a phone call away, his guidance, and advice

throughout the program—it meant a great deal to me. I would like to thank my mother, sister, and family for their support. My partner, Mike, and his family for their constant love and support. Mike was there for every test, every rotation, and both the great and not-so-great days. I could not have survived and excelled without them!

### ASHLEY HARDIN

My entire family has been a major support throughout school. Scott, Denyce, Zach, and Josh Vincent. Barb Zgaynor, Jared Hardin, and Ashley Ryder.

### MARIA HIPPI

I would like to thank RVU PA program staff and faculty for taking a chance on admitting me to the inaugural PA Class of 2020. I promise to always uphold the values of the RVU PA program and I am forever grateful for the opportunity to become a PA.

### ANNA NGUYEN

My family and my fiancé: thank you for always supporting me, for inspiring me, and for making me a better person.

Tiffany Van, PA-C: thank you for your friendship, your support, and for being an amazing preceptor during my first rotation. You really set me up for success throughout clinical year as a PA student!

RVU PA program and faculty: thank you for believing in me, for giving me this opportunity, and for supporting me through completion of the program.

*“I will always remember the friendships made amongst the Class of 2020. We have become so close as we’ve helped establish the program and pave the way for future classes.*

*My classmates have become like family to me and I am proud of everything that we have accomplished.”*

*Jordan Eatough*



## **RVU PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM CLASS OF 2020 AWARDS**

### ***President’s Award Recipient: Elizabeth Crow, MPAS***

Awarded to an outstanding student who embodies the University’s core values of integrity, collegiality, compassion, diversity, excellence, service, and innovation

### ***Excellence Award Recipient: Scott Krech, MPAS***

Awarded for exceeding the expected level of competency in all competency domains and relative to their cohort

### ***Program Director’s Award Recipient: Amy Knackendoffel, MPAS***

Awarded for innovation and initiative in creating opportunities for engagement within the RVU PA Program and the community

### ***Compassion Award Recipient: Jordan Eatough, MPAS***

Awarded for exemplifying the qualities of graciousness and humility, advocating for social justice, and working for the betterment of all members of their community

### ***Collaboration Recipient: Maria Hipp, MPAS***

Awarded for outstanding contribution to their class and the PA program as a whole through leadership, character, collaboration, and service endeavors

# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

## PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM FACULTY AND STAFF

**Cathy C. Ruff, MS, PA-C**  
*Program Director and Chair;  
Associate Professor of PA Studies*

**Colleen Bowles, DO**  
*Medical Director*

**Carrie Chanos, PA-C**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

**Teri Coe**  
*Administrative Assistant*

**Beth Damstedt, PA-C**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

**Barbara Duchemin, PA-C**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

**David Eckhardt, MS, PA-C**  
*Director of Simulation;  
Associate Professor of PA Studies*

**Karen Gieseke, PhD, MS, MTS**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

**Christy Hardt**  
*Program Outreach Coordinator*

**Ann Hartman**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

**Kristin Hunter**  
*Clinical Rotations Coordinator*

**Lise Johnson-Dyhr, PhD**  
*Director of Basic Science Curriculum;  
Associate Professor of PA Studies*

**Julie Kasperski, MSc, MAT, HBS-PA**  
*Assistant Professor of PA Studies*

**Erynn Kay, MMS, PA-C**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

**Jimmie Keller, PA-C**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

**Whitney Lambarri, MS, PA-C**  
*Assistant Professor of PA Studies*

**Julie Messina, PA-C**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

**Sarah Neguse, MS, PA-C**  
*Assistant Professor of PA Studies*

**Thomas Pedigo, PA-C**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

**Darcy Solanyk, MS, PA-C**  
*Associate Program Director;  
Associate Professor of PA Studies*

**Sylvia Vigil, PA-C**  
*Adjunct Faculty*

# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

## COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE FACULTY

<i>An Dang, PhD</i>	<i>Nicole Michels, PhD</i>	<i>Brian Schwartz, PhD, MLIS</i>
<i>Jen Fisher, MLIS</i>	<i>Elizabeth Moffett, PhD</i>	<i>Joseph Stasio, DO, FACOFP</i>
<i>Ian George, PhD</i>	<i>Mark Payton, PhD</i>	<i>Francina Towne, PhD</i>
<i>Clyde Jensen, PhD, MS</i>	<i>Jill Pitcher, DO, FACOFP</i>	<i>Ann Trawick, DO</i>
<i>Rachel M.A. Linger, PhD</i>	<i>Joel Roberts, MD</i>	<i>Qing Zhong, MD, PhD</i>



## PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT ADVISORY COUNCIL

<i><b>Joshua Borgstadt, PA-C</b></i> <i>Pagosa Springs Medical Center</i>	<i><b>Pam J. McManus, MBA</b></i> <i>President and CEO,</i> <i>Peak Vista Community Health Centers</i>
<i><b>Lisa Echaes</b></i> <i>Physician Recruiter, Summit Healthcare</i> <i>Regional Medical Center</i>	<i><b>Michelle Mills</b></i> <i>CEO, Colorado Rural Health Center</i>
<i><b>Karen Gieseke, PhD, MS, MTS</b></i> <i>Epidemiology Coordinator, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment</i>	<i><b>Kandace Shepherd, PA-C</b></i> <i>(Council Chair)</i> <i>Director, Office of Advanced Practice,</i> <i>UCHealth Internal Medicine</i>
<i><b>Doreen Gonzales</b></i> <i>Executive Director, Southeastern Colorado</i> <i>Area Health Education Centers (AHEC)</i>	

IN MEMORY OF : ***Ronald K. Taylor, PA-C***

# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

## UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

**Clinton Adams, DO, FACHE**  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*

**Jerry Armstrong**  
*Vice President of Human Resources*

**Davis Irons, CPA, MBA**  
*Controller*

**David Park, DO, FAAFP, FACOFP**  
*Vice President and Dean for RVUCOM-SU  
Campus*

**Julie Rosenthal, MS**  
*Vice President of Enrollment Management and  
External Relations*

**David ROOS, EdD, MBA**  
*Associate Dean of Student Success  
Assistant Dean of Student Affairs*

**Brian Schwartz, PhD, MLIS**  
*Director of Library Services and Medical  
Informatics, Associate Professor of Medical  
Humanities*

**Thomas N. Told, DO, FACOFP-dist**  
*Chief Academic Officer and Vice President of  
Academic Affairs, Dean for RVUCOM*

**Jennifer Williams, PhD**  
*Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness*



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Clinton E. Adams, DO, FACHE**  
*President and CEO, Rocky Vista University*

**Stan Albrecht, PhD**  
*President Emeritus, Utah State University*

**Dayne Alonso, PA-C**  
*Director, Miami Dade College PA Program*

**Tate Garrett, MBA**  
*Chief Financial Officer, DeliverLean*

**Jeffrey O'Neill**  
*Former President and CEO, The a2 Milk  
Company*

**Molly K. O'Neill, MHA**  
*Chief Growth and Strategy Officer, Medforth  
Global Healthcare Education Group*

**John Peabody, MD, PhD**  
*Founder and President, QURE Healthcare*

**Maha Sallam, PhD**  
*President, VuEssence, Inc.*

**Andrew Sussman, MD**  
*Chief Executive Officer, Medforth Global  
Healthcare Education Group*

**Thomas N. Told, DO, FACOFP-dist**  
*Chief Academic Officer and Vice President of  
Academic Affairs, Rocky Vista University*