

# RVU MISSION STATEMENT

---

ROCKY VISTA UNIVERSITY  
PROVIDES QUALITY HEALTHCARE EDUCATION  
WHILE INSPIRING STUDENTS TO SERVE WITH  
COMPASSION, INTEGRITY, AND EXCELLENCE.

# PA PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

---

THE MISSION OF THE ROCKY VISTA PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT  
PROGRAM IS TO PREPARE CLINICALLY COMPETENT,  
COLLABORATIVE, AND COMPASSIONATE PHYSICIAN  
ASSISTANTS TO PROVIDE PRIMARY CARE.



# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Graduates of the Physician Assistant Program,

Congratulations on reaching this significant milestone! As the President of Rocky Vista University, it is my honor to celebrate with you, your families, and your friends. Your dedication and resilience have culminated in this remarkable achievement, and I am incredibly proud of each one of you.

Becoming a Physician Assistant is more than a career; it is a lifelong commitment to learning, compassion, and service. Your time at RVU has equipped you with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel. You have shown exceptional ability in both academics and clinical practice.

Today, you begin a new chapter. You will apply your skills to address real-world health challenges. As integral members of healthcare teams, you will make significant contributions to patient care and public health. Your role will go beyond treating illnesses; you will advocate for prevention and wellness, bridging gaps in healthcare delivery.

Remember, the foundation of your practice is empathy and respect. In the face of rapid medical advancements, your compassion will be key to your success. Continue to cultivate kindness, empathy, and humility.

Stay curious and committed to lifelong learning. Medicine is ever evolving, and your adaptability will be crucial. Seek professional development, collaborate with peers, and engage with the broader medical community.

We are proud to have been part of your journey. Your hard work has prepared you to be outstanding Physician Assistants, setting a standard of excellence for future students. As you enter your professional careers, carry our support and best wishes. Lead with integrity and serve with compassion. We believe in your potential to achieve remarkable success.

Congratulations, Class of 2024! You are the future of healthcare, and we are excited to see the impact you will make.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Forstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David A. Forstein, DO, FACOOG (dist.)  
President and CEO  
Rocky Vista University

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER



### **Jimmie (Jim) Ellis Keller, PA-C Emeritus, DFAAPA**

Mister Keller retired as a Major from the United States Army on February 1, 1994, after more than twenty-six years of active Federal service. Prior to his retirement, he served as the first Chief, Physician Assistant (PA) Section, and Assistant Chief, Army Medical Specialist Corps; and as the PA Consultant to The Army Surgeon General. Prior to these appointments, Mr. Keller served as the first Army PA selected for Presidential Support in the White House Medical Unit from 1984 to 1988 serving President Ronald W. Reagan and then Vice-President George H.W. Bush (41).

Mister Keller entered active duty on August 15, 1967, as an enlisted soldier from Morganton, NC, and served as a combat medic/corpsman in two infantry battalions of the 47th Infantry Regiment assigned to the 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta of the Republic of Vietnam. Among his military awards are the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with One Oak Leaf Cluster, the Meritorious Service Medal with Two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal with Three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Combat Medical Badge, the Expert Field Medical Badge, the Presidential Service Badge, the Parachutist Badge, Designation as a Distinguished Member of the U.S. Army Medical Department Regiment, and the Order of Military Medical Merit.

Mister Keller graduated from the U.S. Army – Baylor University Military PA Training Program on July 9, 1976. He was awarded the "A" Proficiency Professional Designator by The Surgeon General of the Army, was board certified as a Primary Care PA by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (NCCPA), from 1977 - 2013, and retired in May 2018 after forty-two years of clinical practice. He holds a Master of Public Health Degree from The George Washington University, a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Management/Health Care from Park University, an Associate of Science Degree from Baylor University, and is a graduate of the Interagency Institute of Federal Health Care Executives. He has been involved with PA education and program planning since 1994. He was the Director of the PA educational programs at East Carolina University (1994 – 1997) and at Red Rocks Community College in Lakewood, Colorado (2001 – 2007). He has been an adjunct professor with the PA Program at Rocky Vista University in Parker, CO, since August 2019.

Mister Keller is a member of numerous professional organizations and served as the Department of Defense Representative on the Board of Directors (and Vice Chairman in 1993) of the NCCPA. He is a Distinguished Fellow of the American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA), and a Fellow of the Society of Army Physician Assistants. Mister Keller chaired the Government Affairs Council of the AAPA from 1991-1993. In 1991, he was honored by the AAPA as the recipient of the PA Awareness Achievement Award and the Outstanding Military PA of the Year, and by the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States as the recipient of the Outstanding PA of the Year Award. He has three sons (Jay, Jon, and stepson Alex), and seven grandchildren. His wife, Debra, is a retired Army Colonel, and they live in Highlands Ranch, CO, near all of their sons and their families.

# COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

## PROCESSIONAL

### WELCOME

Cathy Ruff, MS, PA-C

### GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

David Forstein, DO, FACOOG (dist.)

### STUDENT COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

Ellery Roberts, MPAS

### COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

Jim Keller, PA-C

### AWARDS

Cathy Ruff, MS, PA-C

### PRESENTATION AND HOODING OF THE MPAS CLASS

David Forstein, DO, FACOOG (dist.)

David Eckhardt, MS, PA-C

Sarah Neguse, MS, PA-C

Cassidy Punt, MS, PA-C

Cathy Ruff, MS, PA-C

### CONFERRAL OF THE MPAS DEGREE

David Forstein, DO, FACOOG (dist.)

### OATH

Darcy Solanyk, MS, PA-C

### CLOSING REMARKS

Cathy Ruff, MS, PA-C

## RECESSIONAL

# MASTER OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES CLASS OF 2024

MARTIN ANTHONY AGUILAR  
SYDNEY A. ALLEN  
ASHLI BARTOLO  
DYLAN BERMAN  
JENNA BOOTH  
SARAH BRENNER  
ALISON LOUISE BURCH  
JOHN ANTHONY CAREY  
GABRIEL CHAVEZ  
MADISON EMNETT  
WENDY GRAY  
MEGHAN GRYCZA  
MERA HABIB  
EMMA HESSE  
NICOLETTE HOLCOMB  
ANDREA HULTGREN  
HALEY KAGIMOTO

KAT KELLER  
COURTNEY KRAUSE  
ALINA NOHR  
SHERIDAN QUEEN  
MEGAN ANN REALI  
ROBERT W. RINGWALL  
ELLERY ROBERTS  
ERIN RYAN  
TARIQ SAKOURY  
HALEY SEGELKE  
ALEXANDRA SKENDER  
GRACE SUSANNA SMITH  
SAMANTHA SMITH  
ASHLEY SPELLMAN  
TORI THORLEY  
KENDRA VROMAN  
REBECCA WAINEO



# 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,  
NON MALEFICENCE, 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 ADVANCES 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

I WILL SHARE AND EXPAND KNOWLEDGE WITHIN THE PROFESSION.

THESE DUTIES ARE PLEDGED WITH SINCERITY AND UPON MY HONOR.

# STUDENT AWARDS

## COMPASSION AWARD

This award is for a student who exemplifies the qualities of graciousness and humility, advocates for social justice, and works for the betterment of all members of their community whether internal or external to RVU.

## PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The award is for an outstanding student that embodies the University's Core Values of Collegiality, Compassion, Diversity, Equity, Excellence, Inclusivity, Innovation, Integrity, and Service.

## COLLABORATIVE AWARD

This award is for a student with an outstanding contribution to their class or the PA program as a whole through their leadership, character, collaboration, and service endeavors.

## PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S AWARD

This award is given at the discretion of the PA Program Director to a student who exemplifies all aspects of the Mission of the program.

---

# PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM FACULTY AND STAFF

## CARRIE CHANOS, PA-C

Assistant Professor of PA Studies

## ALISON COVAK, MSPAS, PA-C

Director of Clinical Education;  
Assistant Professor of PA Studies

## MEGHAN DAY, MS, PA-C

Assistant Director of Clinical Education;  
Assistant Professor of PA Studies

## DAVID ECKHARDT, MS, PA-C

Director of Simulation;  
Associate Professor of PA Studies

## CHRISTY HARDT

Program Outreach Coordinator

## JENNIFER HELLIER, PHD

Director of Basic Science and Research;  
Associate Professor of PA Studies

## KRISTEN HUNTER

Clinical Rotations Coordinator

## TERESE LARSON

Program and Didactic Services Coordinator

## LIN MA, MA

Senior Data Analyst

## SARAH NEGUSE, MS, PA-C

Associate Program Director;  
Assistant Professor of PA Studies;  
Director of Admissions

## CASSIDY PUNT, MSBS, MPAS, PA-C

Assistant Professor of PA Studies

## CATHY C. RUFF, MS, PA-C

Program Director and Chair;  
Associate Professor of PA Studies

## KATIE SHAW, MS

Operations Manager

## KANDACE SHEPHERD, MS, PA-C

Student Success Facilitator

## DARCY SOLANYK, MS, PA-C

Associate Professor of PA Studies;  
Director of Curriculum