

Kinesiology

Committed to nurturing the development of the whole person, in body, mind, and spirit.



Excellence in Action: A Year of Impact and Influence by Dr. Hacker

This year, the Department of Kinesiology proudly recognizes the continued national and international impact of Dr. Colleen Hacker's work. Most notably, Dr. Hacker once again served on the world stage as a mental skills coach for Team USA Olympians during the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milan, supporting athletes in one of the most demanding performance environments. She has now consulted with athletes and teams competing in 10 Olympic Games and at least 13 different World Championships. In June, she was also a member of the US Women's Team who, are now back-to-back TST Champions (U.S.-based 7-on-7 soccer tournament)!

In February, Dr. Hacker was featured on the "Welcome to the Party" podcast episode with Julie Foudy, Abby Wambach, and Billie Jean King titled, "Joy vs. Pressure: The Olympic Masterclass." In this conversation, she helped examine

how a joy-based approach to athlete development (highlighted through Norwegian sport systems) can lead to improvements in both performance and well-being. She was also a speaker at the U.S. Soccer SheBelieves Summit as part of a panel titled, "Advancing the Female Athlete: Science, Systems, and Standards." This summit convenes leaders across sport, science, and policy to shape the future of women's soccer. Her presence indicates the critical role of kinesiology professionals in informing systems that support athlete development, health, and performance.

These examples represent only three recent contributions to the field in her storied career. This year, Dr. Hacker was recognized for her excellence when she was selected as one of 26 female innovators for the #IfThenSheCan - The Exhibit: Game Changers. This first-of-its-kind installation

features life-size, 3D-printed statues of each innovator to help elevate women leaders in STEM and inspire future generations. A national public installation timed with the 2026 World Cup, it serves as the single largest collection of statues of women in history and was displayed on the Smithsonian's National Mall. Having already reached 50 million people across all platforms, Dr. Hacker's statue is part of an initiative that is disrupting the narrative about who can lead in fields such as Kinesiology. Dr. Hacker continues to exemplify the type of impactful work we hope to model for our students. The lesson for students is not to try to replicate her scope of influence. Rather, we hope students will identify their own areas of professional interest, develop the requisite expertise through their training in Kinesiology, then leverage their knowledge and skills to create meaningful impact within their communities.

A Milestone Year for the Kinesiology Diversity & Inclusion Speaker Series



This Spring, we celebrated the 10th Annual PLU Kinesiology Diversity & Inclusion Speaker Series in an event that brought more than 140 Kinesiology students, faculty, and staff together for an interactive, discussion-focused evening. This year’s keynote, “The Norwegian Path to a Lifelong Love of Physical Activity,” was delivered by Asta Kvitne, Principal of Haugerud School in Norway, physical educator, and PLU Kinesiology alumna ('96). Her talk explored how culture, policy, and environment can promote a lifelong love for physical movement in a variety of forms.

Drawing from her experiences in Norway, Principal Kvitne invited

attendees to examine how we can make physical activity more accessible, joyful, and sustainable across the lifespan. Students were especially struck by Norway’s emphasis on outdoor life, public access to nature, community-based sport, and the prioritization of fun and participation in youth sport.

“Ninety-three students rated the event’s impact on their growth as students and future practitioners. Almost 60% of students rated the event as a nine out of ten experience and more than 80% rated it an eight or higher.”

In their qualitative responses, many students noted the presentation challenged them to think differently about how physical activity and sport experiences are shaped (and by whom).

Students highlighted Norwegian approaches and policies (e.g., free access to equipment, the right to outdoor recreation, and the Norwegian Children’s Right to Sport policies) as impactful and thought-provoking.

Welcoming back an alumna as keynote offered an example of leadership in our field and demonstrated the impact of a PLU Kinesiology education. Kvitne’s message challenged students to imagine what is possible when physical activity is supported by schools, communities, and public policies. Importantly, students had the opportunity to learn about the difference they can make in their respective professional roles and reflect on how they might encourage diverse physical movement experiences among their future students, clients, and other performers.

2025-2026 Student Award Recipients

Each year, Kinesiology faculty select deserving Kinesiology students for three different organizational awards. The students selected for these awards are being recognized for their outstanding academic achievement, the contributions they have made to their community, service to PLU and to the Kinesiology department, as well as their potential to become future leaders in the field. In addition, the faculty votes for outstanding PLU Kinesiology Undergraduate Students who are recognized for their academic success and their work in the field. The Kinesiology faculty would like to congratulate all of these students on their outstanding accomplishment.

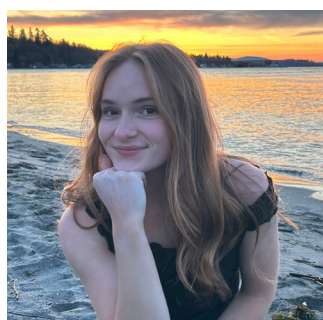
- **Haley Goto** was recognized as the 2026 American Kinesiology Association Undergraduate Scholar of the Year Award Winner
- **Saisha Morales** was awarded both the *SHAPE Washington Roger C. Wiley Emerging Leader Award* and the *SHAPE America Major of the Year Award*.
- PLU Kinesiology Outstanding Graduate Award Recipients
 - Exercise Science: **Aidan Gunderson, Carlie Svarthumle**
 - Pre-Physical Therapy: **Haley Goto**



Haley Goto



Saisha Morales



Carlie Svarthumle



Aidan Gunderson

Community-Engaged Scholarship and Practice: Advancing Youth Sport Coach Education in Pierce County



This year, Dr. Mann launched the Pierce County Youth Sport Coach Education Pilot Project, an initiative grounded in her disciplinary expertise and community need. Supported by a \$900,000 grant from the Names Family Foundation, this three-year project brings together faculty scholars, students, staff, and local community partners to enhance youth sport experiences by providing education designed to improve the practices of a largely volunteer coaching workforce.

This project served as a response to the Pierce County State of Play report (published by Aspen Institute), which identified coach education as a critical need to improve youth sport participation and retention. The project was shaped by Dr. Mann's scholarly expertise in coach education and cultural sport psychology as well as her applied experiences in coaching and delivering coach education trainings. Much like the work of faculty across our department, this initiative reflects how faculty leverage their expertise to create meaningful impact in their respective domains.

Research indicates that most volunteer youth sport coaches receive little to no formal training, and yet they make up the vast majority of youth coaches in the United States. This pilot seeks to change that by providing accessible, evidence-based coach education delivered in ways that account for the context-specific barriers volunteer coaches face.

Through a dynamic, coactive online platform combined with in-person and virtual webinars, coaches are equipped with strategies they can immediately implement. The content is intentionally designed to bridge the gap between research and practice, translating key concepts from Kinesiology into tools that are easily accessible and usable by coaches.

True to the mission of the Kinesiology Department, this initiative highlights the role of faculty as scholar-practitioners and the importance of student engagement in applied learning tasks. To that end, Dr. Mann and Emily Whittaker, PLU Kinesiology Alumna and current FTWL Instructor/Coach Education Pilot Assistant Director have created



a team of Kinesiology students that work with students from across the university to film and edit coaching demonstrations, engage with community coaches, and use evidence to create applied tools for the platform.

Additionally, students in select Kinesiology courses have had the opportunity to turn class projects into deliverables associated for this initiative. In doing so, they are not only preparing for future careers but also contributing to their local community.

“This mission-aligned project stands as an example of what is possible in our field when expertise, passion, and community need align.”



Learning Through Application, Experience, and Service

Kinesiology students continue to engage in meaningful experiential and service-learning opportunities throughout their academic journey. This year, students participated in a range of applied learning experiences across courses and community settings.



In **KINS 314: Team Building**, taught by Dr. Hacker, students engaged in hands-on learning through a high ropes course as they applied concepts from class to collectively navigate the challenges they faced. This Spring, in **KINS 390: Applied Sport Psychology**, students extended their learning through the use of emWave biofeedback technology, which allowed students to monitor their heart rate variability and better understand the relationship between stress and performance.

In **KINS 326: Adapted Physical Activity**, under the guidance of Dr. Katica, 19 students participated in service-learning through Rainier Adaptive Sports, a nonprofit he co-founded. Students supported inclusive physical activity opportunities for individuals

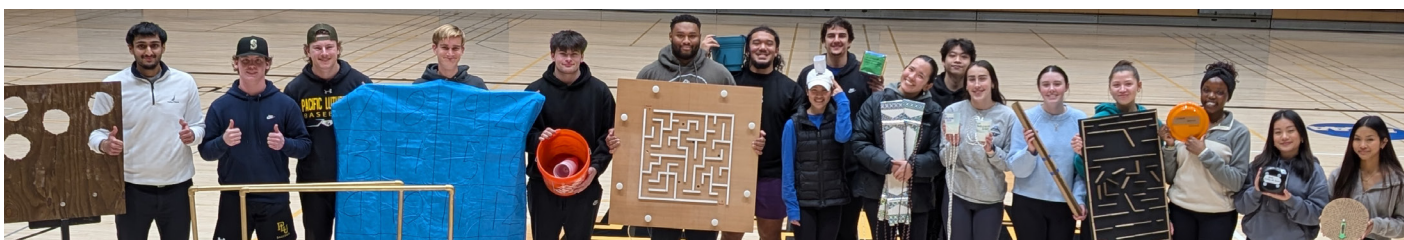
with disabilities while applying course concepts related to adapted physical activity and program design. In particular, students assisted with practice demonstrations and helped organize scrimmages and other events involving sports such as goalball and wheelchair basketball, among others.

Students in **KINS 315: Body Image** and **KINS 320: Nutrition**, Health and Performance participated in a combined outside-of-class cooking demonstration with Registered Dietitians at Virginia Mason Franciscan Health to learn about preparing and consuming nutrient-dense, whole foods. Then, Dr. Mann and Dr. McConnell were able to connect the applied demonstration back to their course content in **KINS 315** and **KINS 320**.

In Dr. Martin's **KINS 334: Applied Training and Conditioning class**, Kinesiology Alumna Kaylee Buck ('17) co-created and co-delivered a fitness training session to help students apply and experience program design and delivery concepts learned in class.

Dr. Farrar encouraged a group of Health and Fitness Education students to volunteer at the SHAPE Washington Conference, a statewide professional event focused on advancing physical education and health.

“These students supported conference operations and engaged with educators in the field, which provided them with opportunities to observe best practices.”



Kinesiology Study Away



This January, Dr. Katica led his third group of students to the United Kingdom (UK) as part of his **KINS 326: Adapted Physical Activity** course, which was designed as a comparative examination of how the U.S. and UK approach physical activity, sport, and inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

The course began with on campus preparation before students traveled to London and across the UK for a multi-week international experience. Students had the opportunity to engage with Paralympians from different countries, as well as leading scholars and practitioners. They also observed and engaged with diverse physical activity and sport programs in action -

gaining firsthand insight into how various systems and policies shape access to sport for all. This year's course was strengthened by Dr. Farrar's involvement, as she supported student engagement throughout the four-week term. In addition to faculty-led programming, Kinesiology students also pursued independent study away opportunities, including experiences in Norway.

This past fall, Jacob De Leon studied at the University of Southeastern Norway's Bø campus, where he immersed himself in Norwegian culture through classes focused on physical activity and sport coaching. Outside the classroom, he embraced every opportunity to explore the country, hiking

scenic trails, traveling to new regions, and kayaking alongside friends, deepening both his cultural understanding and appreciation for Norway's natural beauty.

This international program allows students to explore lifelong physical activity topics while immersing themselves in a Norwegian culture known for its strong emphasis on outdoor activities and accessible physical activity programs.

By engaging in global learning opportunities, students deepen their disciplinary knowledge and also develop the global awareness and perspective needed to lead in the increasingly diverse professional settings in which they will serve.



CONGRATULATIONS TO STUDENT PRESENTERS

Thanks to generous donations from alumni, faculty, staff, and community members during Bjug Day, the Kinesiology Department was able to offset costs for students to attend and present at state conferences.

THANK YOU to every donor who made these experiences possible for students.

Health and Fitness Education students **Saisha Morales**, **Suzie Roberts**, and **Rutger Youch** presented Dotball 360: Variations for K-12 PE at the SHAPE Washington Conference on October 17, 2025. Their presentation provided physical educators in Washington state with ideas for teaching and making Dotball 360 accessible to all K-12 students in the state.

Noah Childress worked with Dr. Katica on a research project titled, *Implications of Body Composition on Oxygen Saturation During Submaximal Exercise*. Noah also delivered oral presentations based on his findings at both the University of Washington Undergraduate Research Symposium, as well as the PLU Rae Linda Brown Undergraduate Research and Creative Projects Showcase.

Kate Sabarillo and **Brittany Vines** also participated in the PLU Rae Linda Brown Undergraduate Research and Creative Projects Showcase this Spring. Under the supervision of Dr. Martin, the duo created a digital poster based on their *Active Access, Motion for All* class project, which mapped and evaluated inclusive recreational and therapeutic physical activity resources in Pierce County, Washington.

Congratulations to all of our student presenters!



Dot Ball 360 presenters



Rae Linda Brown Symposium



Implications of Body Composition on Oxygen Saturation During Submaximal

STUDENT INTERNSHIP PLACEMENT SITES 2025-26

ATI PHYSICAL THERAPY

Izayah Bermudez,
Shan Shan Price

COMPLETE PHYSICAL THERAPY

Chisanna Suzuki Miyanaka

CURTIS HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC TRAINING

Jacob De Leon

EATONVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Waylan Mettler

ELITE PHYSICAL THERAPY

Wyatt Norris

F45 TRAINING

Carson Burke

FOSS HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC TRAINING

Syan Yamamoto

FUKUJI & LUM PHYSICAL THERAPY

Haley Goto

GORDON FAMILY YMCA

Ben Tellez

GROUND 5 FITNESS

Anna Preciado,
Aron Daley

KEALAKEHE HIGH SCHOOL

Kekoa Meyers

LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC TRAINING

Jordan Freer

LITTLE FIN THERAPIES

Carlie Svarthumle

MADIGAN ARMY MEDICAL CENTER

Brittany Vines

OLYMPIC SPORTS & SPINE - GIG HARBOR

Ashlyn Stephens

OLYMPIC SPORTS & SPINE - KENT

Ija Benea

OLYMPIC SPORTS & SPINE - LAKEWOOD

Hana Pinaula

OLYMPIC SPORTS & SPINE - PUYALLUP EAST MAIN

Jaspreet Virdee

PHYSIOSTRENGTH PHYSICAL THERAPY

Jason Montes Padilla

PLU ATHLETIC TRAINING

Amondre Knight,
Hannah Miyasaki

PROVISION ACADEMY

George Sonko

PULSE HEART INSTITUTE CARDIOPULMONARY REHABILITATION (PHICR) - AUBURN MEDICAL CENTER

Jovanna Campillo

PHICR - GOOD SAMARITAN

Markus Larry Apolonio

RAINIER ADAPTIVE SPORTS

Salena Arunee Hansel

SPANAWAY LAKE HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC TRAINING

Emily Salgren

SUNDANCE CIRCLE HIPPO THERAPY

Zoe Smithson

UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND ATHLETIC TRAINING

Katelyn Johnson

THANK YOU to all of our internship site supervisors, cooperating teachers, partner schools, and organizations! **Your dedication to our students and our program makes a difference!**

STUDENT TEACHER PLACEMENTS 2025-26

EDISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MRS. ANNA CASEY

Chana Alonzo Miguel

BLACK HILLS HIGH SCHOOL - MRS. LISA SUMMERS

Saisha Morales

LAKES HIGH SCHOOL - MR. NICK JENSEN

Rutger Youch

CONGRATULATIONS

CLASS OF 2026 KINESIOLOGY GRADUATES

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN KINESIOLOGY AND BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN KINESIOLOGY GRADUATES

Chana Alonzo Miguel
Markus Larry Apolonio

Ija Benea
Carson Burke
Jovanna Campillo
Noah Childress

Aron Daley
Jacob De Leon
Jordan Freer
Haley Goto

Aidan Gunderson

Arune Suvannamethy Hansel

Katelyn Johnson
Dre Knight
Kekoa Meyers

Hannah Miyasaki
Griffin Montana

Jason Montes
Saisha Morales
Wyatt Norris

Brigham Novak

Hana Leeya Pinaula

Anna Preciado
Shan Shan Price
Emily Salgren

Braeden Samura

Zoe Smithson

George Sonko

Ashlyn Stephens

Chisanna Suzuki Miyanaka

Carlie Svarthumle

Ben Tellez

Brittany Vines

Jaspreet Virdee

Syan Yamamoto

Rutger Youch
