

HHP TODAY



The Department of Health and Human Performance

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HHP Goes to CLASS

► The beginning of the 2010–2011 academic year merits a look back on the accomplishments of the department since the year 2000. During that time we experienced a 125% growth in the number of HHP majors, launched a new doctoral degree in kinesiology, and two new masters of science degrees, one in human space exploration sciences and the other in human nutrition.

We also transitioned from training physical education and health education teachers into the training of undergraduate wellness and fitness specialists who graduate with the skills designed to address society's rising tide of obesity accompanied by the lack of physical activity.

In 2007, our faculty was ranked as the most productive in the nation within our academic discipline by a national academic ranking service.

At the same time we were educating more students, we were also dramatically improving our research productivity by more than tripling the number of articles written by our faculty, and increasing the level of our funded research by 500%!

We have also improved our communication with our students and alumni through the use of Web sites, newsletters, annual reports, Facebook, YouTube videos and Twitter. The news of HHP is literally never more than a mouse click away.

It has been a decade of unprecedented growth and positive change for HHP.

As Chair of the department, I am proud of the faculty, students and staff who

work so hard and contribute to the outstanding achievements in innovative academics and groundbreaking research.

As we reflect upon our accomplishments, it is also a good time to look to the opportunities that present themselves in the future. The most significant opportunity presented to HHP is that of integrating ourselves into a different college on the UH campus.

You may have heard that HHP has moved to the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS). The health degrees (HLT) remain within the College of Education, but all of our other programs have moved with the department to CLASS, effective this fall semester.

We expect to capitalize on the many opportunities presented by working more closely with CLASS faculty in both the social sciences and health-related academic disciplines. These interdisciplinary opportunities for collaboration will only strengthen the educational foundation of our students.

I invite you to read our fall newsletter to learn about the people and programs that continue to raise the bar in the study of health and human performance.

Note, there are two opportunities that you or someone you know can participate in: a free lecture series on space physiology and the Texas Obesity Research Center's (TORC) 2010 annual conference.

We also welcome Dr. Tracey Ledoux to our faculty as assistant professor.

I hope you find the newsletter informative and helpful in keeping up with the activities of your department.

The newsletter is also a way to highlight our alumni, so please feel free to let me know where you are and what you are doing at clayne2@uh.edu.

Dr. Charles Layne
HHP Department Chair

P.S. Look for our profile picture below on social networks.



<http://hhp.uh.edu>

UH Flies at the TMC

► The University of Houston flag flies in rotation with other Texas Medical Center (TMC) member organizations' flags at the John C. McGovern campus in Houston. HHP faculty created the UH Center for Neuromotor Biomechanics Research (CNBR), which is also located on the McGovern campus.



Focus on Faculty: Richard J. Simpson



Dr. Richard J. Simpson

► Dr. Simpson, from Glasgow, Scotland, brought a hybrid expertise when he joined the faculty of HHP as an assistant professor in 2008. He earned both his bachelor's in exercise physiology and his doctorate in immunology from Edinburgh Napier University in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The combination of studies is a backdrop for his research interests, which involves the effects of exercise on the immune system. The research benefits top-level athletes, as well as the elderly who need

to develop exercise habits to build their immune system.

Before coming to UH, Simpson was a reservist in the British Army for twelve years and had considerable experience as an applied exercise physiologist, providing sports science support work to a number of high-performance athletes including triathletes, soccer players and rowers.

Currently, his research focus is on latent viral infections, which are very widespread among the population. Many people are not aware they have them.

"One thing we know about some of these viruses is that when they are activated, which can happen frequently throughout a life span, they can cause very dramatic changes within the immune system compartment. That can make you more susceptible to infections as you age and it can also contribute to premature mortality," he explains.

Because some of these infections establish life-long latency, scientists are looking at ways to control the effects of the viruses. Some of these procedures

are invasive with a lot of risks and potential side effects associated with them.

Simpson and his researchers are interested in how lifestyle factors such as exercise, diet and general well-being can influence these conditions.

"If we can show that these lifestyle changes can contribute to the control of the reactivation of certain viruses, then that would offer an alternative, safer, low-cost strategy to try and preserve immunity through the aging process."

Outside of work, Simpson has been a very active and skilled amateur athlete. He became involved in training and competing in sports and endurance events while serving in the British army as a physical training instructor.

In the UK, he participated in duathlons, and represented Great Britain at the World Long Distance Duathlon Championships in Belgium in 2008.

Simpson is currently training for the 2011 Chevron Houston Marathon in January. He hopes to finish it under two hours and 40 minutes. ■

Alumni Spotlight: Jared Harrison

► "I am indeed living my dream job. I have always wanted to be an entrepreneur," said Jared Harrison ('06), founder and owner of HIT FIT, The Health Solution in Houston.

In his hometown of Cleveland, Texas, Harrison began personal training and soon realized he wanted to make a career in physical fitness. This was a natural result of his love for athletics and fitness, playing sports in high school and just being a fitness enthusiast.

The bachelor's program in kinesiology, with an emphasis in sport administration, brought together all of Harrison's interests to become a sport and fitness specialist, and develop the skill set to manage the business side of the industry.

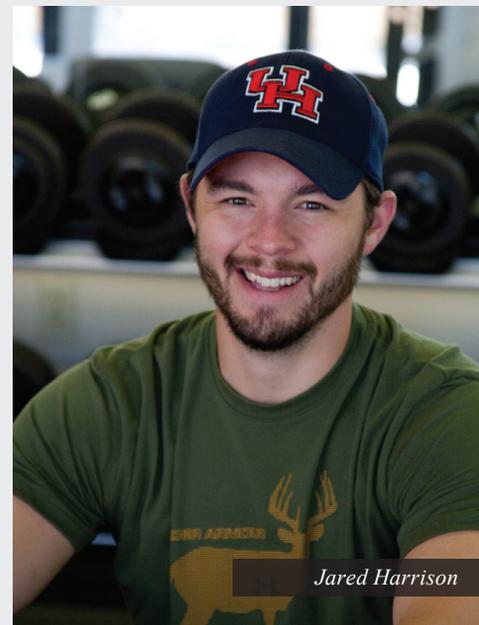
About the HHP professors, he says, "I was glad to learn from instructors who cared about what their students get out

of a class, not just the grade they got on a test."

Harrison explains his current responsibilities: "My particular job within my company is to help my clients achieve their goals, whether it be weight loss, rehabilitation or sports related needs. I also have to make marketing and budgeting decisions, as well as work on expansion of the company."

In the community, he sponsors after-school and church activities for youth, is a Big Brother for Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and participates in Rotary International.

Having lost 80 pounds to reach his level of fitness, Harrison can relate to the challenges of becoming as healthy and fit as possible. His experiences have helped to mold his personal mission of helping people develop and maintain a healthy



Jared Harrison

lifestyle and he believes it is important to lead by example. ■

The Return of TIGER

► The Training Interventions and Genetics of the Exercise Response (TIGER) Study was recently renewed by the National Institute of Health (NIH) for an additional funding of more than \$3.5 million over five years.

The study is designed to investigate how genetic variation may influence levels of body fatness and fitness, both prior to and following a 30-week exercise program.

HHP faculty members, Drs. Brian M^cFarlin, Daniel O'Connor and Tony Jackson will collaborate with Dr. Molly Bray (PI) from The University of Alabama at Birmingham to conduct the study, with UH being the primary performance site.



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Research will include a multi-racial group of 1,536 men and women (18–30 years old) taken from the student population at UH—more than 900 UH students have already participated in the TIGER Study.

The exercise training and fitness evaluation is administered at UH, while the genetic analyses will be performed in collaboration

with investigators at The University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Visit <http://tigerstudy.org> for more information about the study and TIGER researchers. ■

Welcome Dr. Ledoux



Dr. Tracey Ledoux

► Dr. Tracey Ledoux joins the HHP faculty this fall as assistant professor and member of the Texas Obesity Research Center's executive committee.

She earned her Ph.D. in counseling psychology at Oklahoma State University in 2007, and her bachelor's in community counseling from the University of Memphis in 2003. Ledoux is also a Registered Dietitian.

Her research focus is in developing effective obesity prevention interventions that target psychosocial mediators to mitigate the impact of the obesigenic environment and the natural rewarding properties of food on the individual among families in the earliest years of development.

Prior to joining HHP, Ledoux was with the Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Welcome aboard, Dr. Ledoux, we are glad to have you be a part of the HHP department. ■



*Contributed by Dr. Adam Thrasher,
assistant professor of biomedical engineering*

Free Lecture Series

► You are invited to hear renowned NASA scientists speak in the Space Physiology course, which is a component of HHP's Space Life Sciences curriculum.

You may attend any or all the free lectures that interest you on Wednesdays from 2:30–5:30 p.m. in the conference room (104L) of the Garrison Gym.

For more information and a schedule, visit <http://tiny.cc/SpacePhysiology>.



Visit HHP Current Events
at <http://hhp.uh.edu/Currentevents>

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<http://hhp.uh.edu>   

2010 TORC Conference Slated for November



► The Texas Obesity Research Center (TORC) will conduct its second annual conference, “Advancing Obesity in a New Decade,” November 18–19 at the Elizabeth D. Rockwell Pavilion in the M. D. Anderson Library on the UH main campus.

The conference will provide an important opportunity for researchers, practitioners and concerned citizens to come together to learn more about obesity prevention, treatment and control.

It will showcase interdisciplinary, translational and transformational obesity research in Texas and beyond, and demonstrate state-of-the-art and comprehensive approaches for the prevention and treatment of obesity in clinical, community and worksite settings.

The keynote speaker will be Michael I. Goran, Ph.D., who is director of the Childhood Obesity Research Center in the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California.

To learn more about the schedule of speakers and to register, visit www.hhp.uh.edu/obesity. ■



To the left are photos of participants at the 2009 TORC Conference.