Americans are living longer. A recent *American Demographics* report shows just how much longer: by 2020, average life expectancy will be 80 years or more, and that number is likely to climb. These older Americans are also expecting to remain more active as seniors.

An older population that also wants to age healthily means the demand for physical therapists is increasing—and the demands on physical therapists are increasing as well. In response to this need, the University of Hartford recently announced a new doctoral program, the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT). The DPT is now the fifth doctoral-level degree to be offered by the university.

“People are no longer accepting the idea that with age comes loss of mobility,” explains Catherine Certo, professor and chair of the Department of Physical Therapy in the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions. Certo says that this change is affecting the way clinicians practice. Patients are seeking direct access to physical therapists, rather than getting referrals from physicians as they have in the past.

“Physical therapists are expected to make a diagnosis and determine whether physical therapy is appropriate care, or if the client should be referred to another specialist,” Certo says.

This trend toward direct access is on the rise. Physical therapists are already evaluating patients directly in 39 states, according to the American Physical Therapy Association, and it’s likely the remaining states will follow.

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Over the eight years since her arrival at the university, Certo has developed the curriculum, added labs, and expanded the program to include a master’s degree a few years after the department’s inception. She is most proud of the curriculum’s evidence-based approach. “The field is relying more and more on research to support clinical decisions,” she says. “We have faculty doing research that directly involves the students, who must present and ultimately publish their results.”

Graduates of the physical therapy program say they found it to be a rigorous curriculum that provided a solid foundation for private practice. Keith D. Steibigiel ’98, a graduate of the first class of physical therapy majors in the bachelor’s degree program, says the “evidence-based approach to the teaching of materials has helped me further my own research.”

Michael Cianciulli ’02 agrees. “Upon entering the real world, I felt confident about my knowledge base as well as my skill level. Not only did our professors enforce the importance of evidence-based practice, but they also empowered us with the ability to properly research journals and medical articles to find answers.”

A further enhancement to the program is the private clinic now operating on the university’s main campus. “The providers include adjunct and full-time faculty, and students benefit by being linked to the clinic through various professional courses called Integrated Clinical Experiences,” Certo says.

The change to a DPT as the entry-level clinical degree in physical therapy was not meant to denigrate the value of physical therapists already practicing, according to Certo. “We hope that current clinicians will be inspired to seek additional knowledge, either formally or informally, to meet the new challenges.”
Rizzo Named Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Don Rizzo has been named the university’s vice president for institutional advancement, having served as acting vice president since October 2004.

Rizzo joined the university in May 2004 as senior director of development and was named acting vice president for institutional advancement five months later. In a letter to the board of regents announcing Rizzo’s new appointment, President Walter Harrison said Rizzo “has earned the respect of the university’s officers and deans and has established an easy and comfortable working relationship with countless colleagues throughout the university.

“Don has implemented a dramatic and important reorganization of our institutional advancement office,” continued Harrison. “This thorough reorganization will help us markedly improve our fundraising efforts.

Don has attracted a new group of development officers…who bring energy, enthusiasm, and experience to blend with those of our staff who continue to serve the university in this office.”

Rizzo earned a master’s degree in education administration from Bradley University in Illinois and a bachelor’s degree in political science from Tarkio College in Missouri. He has more than 30 years of fundraising experience at well-known and successful institutions of higher education, including the Claremont Graduate School and the Claremont University Center, Bradley University, the University of Massachusetts–Lowell, University of Denver, Butler University, Loyola University New Orleans, and Endicott College.

CETA Looks Back with Pride

The faculty and administrators who laid the foundation for what is now the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA) came together on June 9 to celebrate the past and look ahead to a very promising future.

During a reception and dinner at The 1877 Club, the university honored former deans and faculty members of the College of Engineering and Ward College of Technology, which merged in 2003 to form CETA.

Many speakers at the dinner paid tribute to Alan J. Hadad, who stepped down as CETA dean in June and has been named associate vice president and dean of university magnet schools (see page 12). Louis Manzione, founding executive director of Bell Laboratories research center in Ireland, became CETA dean on Aug. 15.

Attendees at the dinner heard from three University of Hartford presidents. Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, president from 1977 to 1988, said he is proud of all the progress that has been made at the university and of its growing local, regional, and national prominence. Former President Humphrey Tonkin (1989–98) and current President Walter Harrison (since 1998) delivered videotaped messages.


Also in attendance were family members of three former deans who are now deceased. They included Jeannette Lescarbeau, widow of Roland F. Lescarbeau, who was the first dean of Ward College (1948–72); Mary Alsing, widow of Carl F. Alsing, dean of the College of Engineering from 1970 to 1971; and Chester G. Gehman, son of Chester A. Gehman, who was acting dean of Ward from 1972 to 1973.
Hadad Named Dean of University Magnet Schools

Alan Hadad, who stepped down as dean of the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture on July 1, has been named associate vice president and dean of university magnet schools. In addition to his administrative assignments, Hadad, a professor of physics, will teach selected courses at the university.

In a letter to faculty and staff announcing Hadad’s new appointment, President Walter Harrison said not only will the university’s two magnet schools—one elementary and the other a high school—radically change “the geography of our campus, but also the existence of these two public schools has already begun to change significantly the educational programs we provide.”

In his new role as dean of these schools, Hadad will be responsible for maintaining and strengthening the connections between the university, the Capitol Region Education Council, and the Hartford Public Schools, which manage the magnet schools. He will be especially involved in the details of the construction of the new University High School of Science and Engineering, scheduled to be completed by September 2007. During the interim, the school is located on the university’s Asylum Avenue campus.

Hadad was one of the driving forces behind the new high school and serves as the principal investigator on the $400,000 planning grant for the high school awarded by the Woodrow Wilson and the Bill and Melinda Gates foundations.

Describing Hadad’s 16 years as an academic dean, Harrison wrote that Hadad “has established an enviable record of leadership and accomplishment. That record includes his role in the development of eight new programs—six undergraduate and two graduate—that resulted in dramatic increases in enrollment. Two of these programs—architectural engineering technology and audio engineering technology—are now among the largest and most successful at the university.”

A Promise Well Kept

Members of a 1990 Annie Fisher Fifth-Grade Class Say Thank You to George Weiss

In 1990 financier and university regent George Weiss promised 76 members of the fifth-grade class at Hartford’s Annie Fisher Elementary School that if they graduated from high school, he would reward each with a free college education. Weiss is a man who keeps his promises.

The Say Yes to Education (SYTE) program marked its successful conclusion with a June 10 celebration at the Marriott hotel in Windsor, Conn. The event paid tribute to this year’s final group of college graduates and all those previous SYTE students who earned their degrees over the past 15 years. Of the original 76 students, 60 graduated from high school, and 21 of those have completed a bachelor’s degree. Twelve others have earned an associate’s degree or trade certificate. The SYTE program included intensive mentoring and support from the SYTE staff, based in the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions at the University of Hartford.

Approximately 30 honorees—some coming from as far as Atlanta, Ga., and Columbus, Ohio—were joined for the festivities by local school and university officials; SYTE staff; and local program sponsors, university regent Mort and Irma Handel and John Berman. Graduates were each presented with a DVD of themselves as fifth-graders when they started the program and a 1990–2005 SYTE photo collage.

Provost Donna Randall, who attended the evening’s moving ceremony, was impressed by Weiss’s “deep devotion to Say Yes students. It was so clear,” Randall said, “from the comments made by graduates of the program that George’s unwavering belief in their potential changed their lives.”