Distributed by UW News Service, November 24, 2025

Link to original story: <https://www.uwlax.edu/news/posts/returning-to-their-roots/>

**Returning to their roots**

### **Alumni physicians give back through UW-La Crosse’s Physician Assistant Studies program**

Written by UW-La Crosse University Marketing & Communications

As healthcare continues to evolve — with new technologies, treatments and regulations shaping patient care — healthcare education must keep pace.

At UW-La Crosse, the [Physician Assistant Studies program](https://www.uwlax.edu/academics/grad/physician-assistant-studies/) is doing just that by inviting experienced medical professionals from across the La Crosse region to share their expertise in the classroom. Many of these professionals are UWL alumni, returning to their alma mater to educate the next generation of healthcare providers.

“It is great to be part of the UWL family again — both teaching lectures in the PA program and precepting the PA students in our clinic,” says Dr. Daniel Anderson,’09, a neurologist at Mayo Clinic Health System-La Crosse. “My experience at UWL was amazing from both an academic and personal standpoint, and it is fun to be able to be part of that journey for current students.”

Anderson says UWL influenced his path to pursue medicine, particularly professors who challenged him and made learning fun. He recalls organic chemistry with Curtis Czerwinski, biochemistry with Todd Weaver and Human Anatomy and Physiology and neurophysiology with Bradley Seebach, to name a few.

 “I really enjoyed all of the science courses I was enrolled in; however, I really had a passion for human anatomy and physiology,” he says.

A turning point came when he worked as a teaching assistant in the cadaver lab at UWL as an undergraduate — an experience he later realized gave him a distinct advantage in medical school because peers hadn’t had that kind of hands-on training. “That experience helped me earn a TA position in my medical school’s cadaver lab as well,” he adds.

Another alumnus giving back is Dr. Arnie Asp, ’76, a retired endocrinologist who spent more than two decades in the U.S. Army before joining Gundersen Health System. He credits several emeritus faculty  — Allen Nelson, Robert Burns, and Martin Venneman  — with encouraging him to pursue medical school. Now, he’s paying it forward by helping teach PA courses and shaping a profession he values deeply.

“Physician assistants play a critical role in patient care,” says Asp. “As long as I can meaningfully contribute to their education, I will do so.”

Asp’s career included extensive work with physician assistants in both clinical and operational roles — experience he now brings into the classroom.

The program has long relied on medical professionals as guest lecturers, adjunct instructors and clinical preceptors to enrich the learning experience, says Maggie Laufenberg, director of UWL’s Physician Assistant Studies program.

“Experienced professionals bring firsthand knowledge of patient care, clinical workflows and medical decision-making, besides the expertise of their scientific knowledge and training,” she says. “As program director, I find it imperative to not only lean on experts in the field, but also our community to help shape the next generation of healthcare providers.”

These alumni and community contributors play an important role in the program — from co-developing coursework that reflects evolving community health needs to providing hands-on mentorship in clinical settings. Their involvement strengthens real-world connections, introduces students to current best practices, and offers professional role models for students.

While guest lecturers are offered compensation, many decline, choosing instead to volunteer their time and expertise.

For Asp and Anderson, the reward lies in the impact. And they can already see it.

Anderson has written letters of recommendation for PA Studies students, noting “they really perform just as good as I would expect from medical students.”

Asp agrees that they have great potential.

“UWL students are bright, interested and eager to progress through training,” he says. “They will be excellent additions to healthcare in America.”