UWF College of Health adds synthetic cadavers to state-of-the-art lab

Pensacola, Fla. – Oct. 17, 2016 – Students in the University of West Florida College of Health now have the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the human body through the use of synthetic cadavers. The cadavers are part of the newly developed Applied Anatomy and Physiology Laboratory, housed within the Department of Exercise Science and Community Health.

The state-of-the-art lab was developed to impact students in all programs under the College of Health as they study individual and overlapping aspects of human health. Exercise science and athletic training students are able to use the SynDaver Anatomy Models to gain a spatial understanding of musculoskeletal interactions and neural and vascular systems while nursing students are afforded a more in-depth experience for intramuscular injections and intravenous line placements.

Students in the Doctor of Physical Therapy program are also utilizing the SynDavers for hands-on practice in helping patients through specific muscle movement exercises. Students from the public health, health sciences, medical laboratory sciences and psychology programs will also access them for discipline-specific, hands-on experiences.

“The SynDavers allow students to physically interact with the human body,” said Dr. Eric Greska, assistant professor in the Department of Exercise Science and Community Health. “With these experiences, our students are able to visualize the structures within the body as they interact with patients on the surface level.”

Students in the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program, a partnership between UWF and the University of South Florida, are utilizing the SynDavers to study anatomy focused on human movement, said Dr. Steve Ambler, associate professor in the USF School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Sciences and coordinating faculty member for the UWF/USF DPT Partnership. The lab’s technology also enables them to broadcast their lessons to USF, which Ambler said broadens the impact and allows even more students to benefit from the hands-on learning experience.

“We can put the SynDavers in the context of different movements so that students can understand how changes in movement impact anatomy,” Ambler said. “Students are also gaining valuable experience as peer teachers for undergraduates in various programs under the College of Health. All health-related disciplines are intertwined. I think it’s incredibly beneficial that the new Applied Anatomy and Physiology Laboratory and its technology are creating an inter-professional learning environment for all students in the UWF College of Health.”

The SynDaver is an education-grade synthetic human cadaver, complete with all bones, joints, muscles, organs and tendons in normal human anatomy and made from materials that mimic

the mechanical, thermal and physicochemical properties of live tissue. Major nervous system and vascular components are also included.

The synthetic cadaver is an ideal alternative to human cadavers, allowing students in the College of Health to become familiar with the look and feel of a live human body without specialized facilities, risk of exposure to biohazards or compromising a live patient. UWF purchased three cadavers, costing $60,000 each, through the UWF Systemic Technology grant, which is funded by student technology fees.

Synthetic cadavers like these are also being used at institutions such as the University of Florida, Columbia University, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Oxford University in the United Kingdom.

To learn more about the UWF College of Health, visit uwf.edu/coh.

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