

UCC Program Review Committee Summary of Review

Program: Physical Therapy

Date of last review: AY 2006-2007

Date of this review: AY 2021-2022

The program offers the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT)

Recommendation: This program is found to be viable.

See report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

The report was forwarded to the division's director and the college dean. Their joint response is attached.

The Graduate Council's comments are included as well.

Program Review

Review of the Division of Physical Therapy
School of Rehabilitation and Communication Sciences
College of Health Sciences and Professions
November 8-9, 2021

Review Committee:

Dr. Julie White, Professor of Political Science, Director of Women's Gender, & Sexuality Studies
Dr. Jacqueline Tudor, Associate Professor of Biology
Dr. Ryan Shepherd, Associate Professor of English

Programmatic Overview

The Physical Therapy program is housed in the College of Health Sciences and the Professions. It was the first in the state of Ohio to transition to the doctoral level awarding the Doctorate of Physical Therapy degree (2003) and is currently ranked in the top quartile of Physical Therapy programs in the nation. The program is very selective with an average cohort size of 44-48 students selected from what is consistently an applicant pool of over 400 students. The 13 core faculty serving these students work with over 200 clinical sites to prepare practicing physical therapists. Since the transition to the DPT degree, the overall licensure pass rate is 100% with no student having to take the exam more than twice. The program advertises itself as providing quality at an affordable price; it is currently one of the two least expensive programs in the state.

The Program in Physical Therapy is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). It is reviewed every 10 years by CAPTE with the most current accreditation occurring in 2019-2020. The program maintains a mix of core faculty appropriate to meet the program's mission. The blend of tenure track, instructional, and clinical track faculty as well as the mixture of clinical expertise provides students with a unique set of opportunities while also meeting the uniform expectations established by CAPTE. Where electives play a role, the faculty has worked to shape opportunities for students to obtain additional certifications and to explore specializations while meeting expectations that the degree program prepares generalists. It is thus not surprising that the graduate rate is 100%.

The faculty profile is well suited to deliver the integrated clinical experience to which the program is committed. The Director of Clinical Education has worked to refine the list of

clinical partners in order both to assure a quality experience for students and to provide “rewards” to those partners for working with Ohio University’s PT students. Clinical partnerships are often facilitated by alum of the program now themselves practitioners and mentors to current students. The strength of the student experience in the program has produced a successful and loyal alumnae network. The alumnae board of the program - a board which raises money and provides housing and career networks for students rotating through clinical settings – is one Alumnae Relations at the University touts as a model.

While the program faculty are diverse in terms of research and clinical experiences, most are fairly recent hires. Several have innovative interdisciplinary research agendas in development and there are exciting possibilities for cross-college collaborations. Mentorship from more experienced colleagues will be important to ensuring that younger colleagues bring this work to fruition. The program lost two of its senior faculty in the last year and has struggled to hire a Program Director. Even with the help of search firms, it has been difficult to recruit – a difficulty attributable both to a lack of salary competitiveness and the rural location of the university. The current interim director, should she succeed in promotion, would meet CAPTE standards of eligibility for the permanent position. Given the profile of the unit, it will be important to have this position filled by someone who can serve not only as director but as mentor to recently hired colleagues.

Faculty and Staff

The Program in Physical Therapy has a faculty of 13 professors. This breaks down to five on the tenure track, seven on the clinical track, and one on the instructional track. One faculty member is currently at the rank of professor, three are at the associate level, and the remaining nine are at the assistant level. Two assistant professors are going up for promotion this year.

Because of two retirements in the program, the faculty is relatively young--though not necessarily inexperienced. Those faculty members new to the program seemed to be satisfied with their level of mentoring and praised more senior members of their department for assistance with research, grants, and institutional support.

Support for faculty by administrative staff was also highly praised. However, there were two minor areas in which more than one faculty member did request additional support: the faculty would like additional lab support and preparation, and they would like additional support with managing grants. The faculty suggested that the first issue could be solved with a hire of a full- or part-time faculty member whose primary responsibility

was lab preparation and support. One possible avenue was to hire a shared line with BIOS or another department for a faculty member who could assist with labs in both programs. Another alternative would be to use additional graduate assistants to help with labs, although this would require regular training of new GAs as experienced GAs graduated. The second issue could perhaps be solved by sharing support staff from other departments or units to manage post-award grants.

In terms of teaching, faculty were generally pleased with the distribution and specialization of the faculty within the program. There were sufficient faculty members to cover all areas needed, and no one expressed dissatisfaction with either the amount or subjects taught. Because the faculty have variable workloads--negotiated at hire and subject to renegotiation--the amount of teaching varied from faculty member to faculty member, with many faculty with a teaching load at a minimum of 30%.

With this varied workload, many faculty members also engaged in varied clinical practice. Clinical faculty had this service count for 30% or more of their workload as well. This was in addition to department, college, university, and professional service.

The nature of the program and accreditation requirements by the CAPTE requires that all faculty engage in some level of research, so all professors engage in a minimum of 10% research, with many engaging in much more and one faculty member with an 80% research load. Aside from the issues of post-award grant support, the faculty felt that they were generally well supported in their research endeavors. In particular, several faculty mentioned other faculty assisting with finding outside funding and with finding research participants.

One major point of concern in the program is the current lack of a program director. Dr. Michele Courtney currently serves as the Interim Program Director, and she could potentially stay on as permanent director if two changes were to happen: if she is awarded a promotion to associate clinical professor, and if the position was changed from tenure track to clinical track. These changes to the position would still be in line with requirements from the CAPTE accrediting body.

Because of the lack of a permanent Program Director, the Program in Physical Therapy is currently out of compliance with CAPTE standards but is still within the window to find a new director. That window closes on July 1 of 2023. Some obstacles to filling this position include the location in a rural area and the relatively low salary. Currently, the expected pay is roughly \$110,000, but the national average for similar positions is closer to \$150,000. A recent candidate for the position turned down the offer, so a new search for the position will need to commence soon.

The program is still viable without the Program Director as long as a new director is found before the deadline.

Graduate students were extremely pleased with the faculty support, especially praising faculty communication, faculty accessibility, and specialized education opportunities. The only minor concern expressed by graduate students in this regard was that they encouraged faculty to communicate with each other more about what was and was not covered across the required classes. A “curriculum summit” would help ensure necessary content is covered in each course.

The faculty in the Program in Physical Therapy was very collegial and seemed mutually supportive. No conflicts were expressed.

Graduate Program

The DPT is a three-year program which offers a high-quality rigorous curriculum to well-qualified students. The program aims to produce broadly trained physical therapists that are well suited to perform competently in a variety of healthcare settings. The program is selective, with an acceptance rate between 10-20%. Each incoming cohort consists of a maximum of 48 students (per CAPTE requirements) with a recent average GPA of 3.78. The diversity of students enrolled in the program is an area targeted for improvement.

Matriculating students are well-prepared for the rigorous curriculum, which includes course work in cadaver dissection, neuroanatomy, cardiopulmonary, pharmacology, clinical practice, and much more. An aim of the program is to train generalists in physical therapy practice, yet students also benefit from the availability of an orthopedic and neurological track. Electives are available for students to gain exposure to subspecialties. Later in the program, students have the opportunity to advance their knowledge and skills in orthopedics, neurorehabilitation, balance and vestibular rehabilitation, women's health, pediatrics, geriatrics, management, and business practice. Students, faculty, staff, and clinical partners cite the curriculum as a major strength of the program. The NPTE pass rate is 100% and is reflective of the rigorous curriculum.

Many faculty members within the department are practicing physical therapists. Thus, these individuals are able to instruct students in didactic, laboratory, and clinical aspects of the discipline. Additionally, the program partners with over 200 clinical partners that provide rotations in areas such as outpatient orthopedics and in-patient acute physical therapy. These clinical partners are found throughout the United States. The Division employs a Director and Assistant Director of Clinical Education. These individuals regularly assess clinical partners using a one to three star ranking system, generate a ranked list of clinical partners, and match students to clinical rotations to satisfy accreditation requirements (and student preference, when

possible). Upon graduation, student employment at six months to one-year post-graduation is 100%.

Students enrolled in the program have many opportunities for mentoring, advising, and support. Students receive initial academic advising during the first year to identify areas of interest. They also receive ongoing advising throughout program progression. Mentoring opportunities are readily available to students, and they take on many forms. Learning communities and the “Bigs” and “Littles” mentorship program offer support to students. Students praised the availability of research opportunities and elective courses; they also noted the benefit of learning from currently practicing physical therapists. Students note that faculty and staff are accessible. Paid graduate assistantships are available for 5-6 students per year. Students expressed a desire for formal assistance in securing housing during clinical rotations.

The physical facilities are sufficient to meet programmatic needs. Grover Center houses a gross-anatomy lab as well as other clinical labs. Students expressed gratitude for 24-hour access to important facilities such as the gross anatomy lab. No faculty or staff requested additional physical space or equipment to meet programmatic needs. However, discussions yielded a need for additional human resources in several areas. First, students and faculty both requested additional support for gross anatomy labs. Students requested that an individual be hired to assist the main faculty member with gross anatomy lab instruction. Faculty requested the hire of a permanent gross anatomy lab technician to assist with lab preparation. Currently, graduate assistants (GAs) fill this latter role. While this is a great opportunity for GAs, it places the responsibility of training new GAs on the faculty member. Tenure-track faculty also pointed to the need for post-award grant support. Staff members in the department accomplish a wide variety of tasks and are well-supported, though additional office help would be beneficial.

The 13 faculty members are well-qualified and offer a breadth of expertise in CAPTE-required areas.

The program offers 5-6 graduate assistantships per year. The GA positions include a tuition waiver and stipend. Approximately 2/3 of DPT students receive financial support through GA/TA positions, scholarships, or hourly employment. Like most graduate health programs, there is an expectation that students will fund some or all of their education. However, OU's DPT is one of the most affordable programs in the state. The total in-state program cost is approximately \$50k compared to the national average of \$66k for public, in-state tuition. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a physical therapist median salary of \$91k for the year 2020. The BLS also projects 21% growth in available PT positions between 2020-2030. Thus, the student “return on investment” for the DPT is high.

Accreditation-required learning outcomes are sufficiently addressed by the DPT program curriculum as evidenced by the high NPTE pass rate.

Areas of Concern

One of the primary areas of concern is the lack of a permanent Program Director for the Program in Physical Therapy. Dr. Michele Courtney currently serves as Interim Director and could potentially continue on in the position currently if she is awarded a promotion to the associate level and if the position is changed to be clinical track. Alternatively, allowing for the position to move closer to the expected \$150,000 mark may make the position more attractive for potential candidates. While this concern is not an immediate danger, it will need to be resolved by July 1, 2023, in order for the program to remain in compliance with CAPTE Standards.

Another minor concern is administrative support. The faculty and students have expressed interest in having a support person in the lab and for lab preparation. They have also expressed interest in having additional support for post-award grant management. While neither issue raised to the level of emergency, faculty suggested that these support positions would free them up for more critical issues and potentially allow them to be more productive in terms of research and grants.

The lack of diversity among both faculty and students is a concern. This faculty are aware of this issue and are taking steps to address it when possible. Additional steps may include recruiting students from outside the state of Ohio, but this would require additional funding for advertising and outreach. Alternatively, the faculty may attempt to tap contacts at regional campuses or other Ohio University locations near urban centers to help recruit students from underrepresented groups. Additional funding or resources for marketing the program may help to alleviate this issue.

Areas of Commendation

The department is exceptionally collegial, seems to be pleased with the current program, and appears to be dedicated to student advancement. There were very few complaints during the internal review visit.

The faculty seems exceptionally well prepared to handle the curriculum offered. They work together very well and seem to support one another in research, teaching, and service. They are knowledgeable and able to convey information effectively to students and non-experts.

The alumni network is very strong. Students are placed into contact with practicing physical therapists in the field. Many faculty have graduated from the program and chosen to come back to teach. This helps to demonstrate the positive environment the program has created.

The program is highly successful at integrating classroom and clinical practice--with over 200 clinical sites. This is likely one reason for the 100% pass rate on the NPTE. Students are

successfully placed in physical therapy careers but are also prepared for opportunities in research or teaching.

Summary

The Physical Therapy program is viable and appears to be viable for the foreseeable future, continuing a tradition of excellence. This is to be expected given the Physical Therapy Program has a reputation as a high-quality and successful professional program at a low cost to enrolled students. The well-qualified faculty is productive in research, teaching, and clinical service. The curriculum is robust and successfully prepares students for practice in the field. The program is selective, attracts qualified students, and prepares them for the job market. The program is an asset to the university.

Executive Summary

Commendations

- The program attracts high-quality students and is selective in enrollment: consistently the program receives in excess of 400 applicants for 48 spots in the entering class.
- The program curriculum involves clinical, laboratory, and classroom learning experiences that meets student needs well. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed, and the level of rigor is appropriate for a doctoral program. Faculty, students, and clinical partners note the consistent high-quality of the Physical Therapy curriculum.
- The physical facilities are well suited to student and faculty needs.
- Students have access to a variety of clinical rotations with over 200 different clinical partners. The Division employs two full-time individuals who continuously assess the quality of rotations provided by clinical education partners and place students into appropriate rotations. Efforts are made to offer a diverse array of clinical experiences.
- Students have a 100% pass rate on the NPTE.
- Students have a 100% job placement rate.

Concerns

- The program is currently served by an interim director and must find a permanent replacement by July, 2023.
- As is the case with many programs at Ohio, the physical therapy program does not currently attract a diverse student body.
- As is the case with many programs at Ohio, the physical therapy program has struggled to recruit and retain diverse faculty.

Recommendations

- The committee recommends the university/college consider reviewing the compensation for the director position in order to position the department for successful recruitment.
- Given the strength of this program, investment of university resources to recruit more diverse students and faculty would be likely to yield results.



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December 10, 2021

UCC Program Review Committee

Dear Dr.'s White, Tudor, and Shepherd:

Thank you for your recent Program Review of the Ohio University Division of Physical Therapy on November 8th and 9th, 2021. We appreciate your time and energy reviewing our program and providing a thorough review. Two of the concerns identified are of no surprise to the Division and the College as we have identified these as well and have been continuing to proactively address the concerns prior to the program review.

- 1) Serving as Interim Program Director since July 1, 2021, Dr. Courtney does not meet one of the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) Standards (4G) requiring the Program Director to hold the rank of associate professor, professor, clinical associate professor, or clinical professor. The program has until July 1, 2023 to be in full compliance with the standard. In addition, there is a current search underway for Program Director including the use of a search firm to recruit potential candidates.
- 2) The second concern shared in the report is faculty and students' concern re administrative support. More specifically, faculty and students' reported need for laboratory support and post-award grant management. This was a new concern brought to the Division's attention and will need to be explored and investigated to determine if support is necessary and if resources exist to support additional administrative support. The college has a director of finance and an accounting support senior specialist available. This shared service across the college is relatively new and along with a disconnect related to remote learning it is possible there needs to be renewed efforts to engage with researchers on these services.
- 3) The final concern, a lack of diversity among both faculty and students, is a concern that we, as a Division and as a College, have been very aware of and have continued to address regularly. From a student perspective, we have continued to recruit at a variety of urban and rural locations in and outside of the state. In addition, we have begun including alumni of diverse backgrounds participating in our preview/interview day to promote to candidates our commitment to diversity in admissions. With respect to faculty, we have used robust search processes to recruit nationally and have not been successful in obtaining a diverse applicant pool. We currently only have the one position available for Program Director.

In conclusion, we appreciate the thorough review of our program and are proud of our successes but continue to work diligently on enhancing our program within Physical Therapy Education and the University. Of course, the immediate concern of gaining full compliance before July 1, 2023 for the Program Director position (CAPTE Standard 4G) is at the forefront of our action plans. We also continue to work on improving the diversity among students and faculty and will explore the reported need for laboratory support and/or post-award grant management.

Thank You,

John McCarthy

Michele Courtney, PT, PhD, MBA
Interim Program Director
Assistant Clinical Professor
Board Certified Clinical Specialist in Pediatric PT
Certified Lymphedema Therapist

From: [Charlotte Elster](#)
To: [Such, Barbel](#)
Subject: comments from the GC Program Review Committee
Date: Saturday, January 22, 2022 6:35:06 PM

NOTICE: This message was sent from outside Ohio University. Please use caution when clicking links or opening attachments in this message.

Hi Baerbel:

The Graduate Council reviewed the following programs on Jan. 21, 2022:

2. Division of Physical Therapy, School of Rehabilitation and Communication Sciences.

We concur with the finding of the review committee, namely that the program is viable and thriving.

We also concur with the recommendations and wish success in gaining full compliance through filling the Program Director position.

---Charlotte

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