

Academic Programs Committee Agenda Sample

College of Health

Athletic Training and Physical Therapy

New Degree Program Request: Proposal to Transition from the MPT (Master of Physical therapy) Degree to the DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy) Degree

The Department of Athletic Training and Physical Therapy and the College of Health are proposing that the Program in Physical Therapy transition from the current 75 credit hour MPT (Master of Physical Therapy) entry-level Degree to a 99 credit hour DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy) entry-level Degree. The last MPT class will enroll in the fall 2005 semester and graduate in December 2007. The first DPT cohort will enroll for the fall 2006 semester and graduate in May of 2009.

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) is a post-baccalaureate entry-level degree conferred upon successful completion of an entry-level professional education program. The DPT is a professional “clinical” doctorate that prepares the graduate to practice physical therapy. Consistent with academic precedent, this “professional” degree is not considered in the category of “academic” degrees such as the MA, MS, or PhD. The DPT degree is however, consistent with professional degrees in medicine, osteopathy, dentistry, veterinary medicine, optometry, audiology, pharmacy and podiatry.

In Florida, individuals are eligible to sit for the physical therapy licensure examination if they have received either a masters or doctoral degree in physical therapy from an institution that is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). Both the masters entry-level and doctoral entry-level programs are accredited by CAPTE, using the same evaluative criteria.

The physical therapy profession has recognized that the level of physical therapy practice inherent to the patient/client management requires considerable breadth and depth in educational preparation, a breadth and depth beyond that acquired within the time constraints of entry-level Masters degree programs. Clinical competence consistent with the preferred outcomes of evidence-based practice requires that similar to medicine, osteopathy, dentistry, veterinary medicine, optometry, audiology, pharmacy and podiatry, practitioners possess knowledge at the doctoral level.

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), and the professional accrediting body, the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) support transition from an entry-level masters degree to an entry-level professional doctoral degree. In 2000 the APTA House of Delegates endorsed Vision 2020, a vision statement for the next 20 years that contains a clear reference to “doctors of physical therapy,” reflecting the Association’s support for doctoral prepared practitioners and the clinical doctorate as the first professional degree. Although the APTA made the decision not to mandate this transition, the transition to the DPT across the discipline is reality.

The desire to transition from the master's to the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) is also driven in part by the national trend towards more autonomous practice on the part of physical therapists, which in turn is driving an expansion in the breadth and content of professional preparation programs. Current and future expectations and preferences for practice including direct patient access to physical therapy in 40 states including Florida dictate that physical therapists develop clinical skills at the doctoral level.

There is also the need to remain competitive in the recruitment of highly qualified new students, many of whom are now choosing institutions that do offer the DPT. The transition will position the program to more successfully recruit the most highly qualified applicants in an extremely competitive applicant marketplace.

As of October 1, 2004, 107 of the 204 physical therapy educational programs in the United States award the DPT degree. It is anticipated that by 2007 approximately 85% of all physical therapy programs will award the DPT degree. It is also quite likely that professional accreditation will require that all entry-level programs award the DPT in the near future (5 to 10 years).

In Florida, there are 10 physical therapy programs; 7 reside in state universities and 3 reside in private institutions. Prior to October 21, 2004, only the private institutions offered physical therapy education at the DPT or doctoral level. However, on October 21, 2004 the Florida Board of Governors approved the University of South Florida's proposal to offer the DPT degree beginning in spring 2005. Of the 6 remaining state-supported universities, 5 including the UNF program have expressed intent to seek approval to offer the DPT degree.

The College and Program are hopeful that the inaugural DPT class will enroll for the fall 2006 semester (Class of 2009). The Master's degree in Physical Therapy (MPT) will be discontinued when authorization to award the DPT is granted. It is anticipated that the last MPT class will be admitted for the fall 2005 semester (Class of 2007). Students admitted to the final MPT class will be given the opportunity to defer admission and enroll in the inaugural DPT class.

The proposed 99-credit program will require the addition of two incremental faculty FTEs at the assistant/associate professor level. Both faculty members will be on nine-month contracts. The first faculty member will be hired during 2006 and the second faculty member during 2007. We anticipate hiring one assistant professor at an annual salary of \$60,000 (plus \$16,800 benefits), and one associate professor at an annual salary of \$70,000 (plus \$19,600 benefits).

Additional recurring funding of \$20,000 is being requested for the purchase of additional anatomical specimens, and to allow faculty to make additional clinical internship site visits for a class of up to 36 students. The total number of student clinical placements will approach 180 for the third year of program implementation and subsequent years.