WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

College of Health and Human Sciences

Department of Physical Therapy

Doctor of Physical Therapy Curriculum Plan

**PROFESSION AND PHYSICAL THERAPY PRACTICE:**

Definition: “Physical therapy is a dynamic profession with an established theoretical and scientific base and widespread clinical applications in the restoration, and maintenance, and promotion of optimal physical function. …physical therapists: diagnose and manage movement dysfunction and enhance physical and functional abilities; restore, maintain and promote not only optimal physical function but optimal wellness and fitness and optimal quality of life as it relates to movement and health; and prevent the onset, symptoms, and progression of impairment, functional limitations, and disability that may result from diseases, disorders, conditions, or injuries…”(*Normative Model for Physical Therapist Professional Education: Version 2004,* p. 8*).*

“Physical therapy is defined as the care and services provided by, or under the direction and supervision of, a physical therapist. Physical therapists are the only professionals who provide physical therapy interventions. Physical therapist assistants are the only individuals who provide selected physical therapy interventions under the direction and supervision of the physical therapist.” (*Guide to Physical Therapist Practice,* pp. 31-32).

Physical Therapists:

* *Provide services to patients/clients who have impairments, functional limitations, disabilities, or changes in physical function and health status resulting from injury, disease, or other causes.*
* *Interact and practice in collaboration with a variety of professionals.*
* *Address risk.*
* *Provide prevention [services] and promote health, wellness, and fitness.*
* *Consult, educate, engage in critical inquiry, and administrate.*
* *Direct and supervise the physical therapy service, including support personnel.*

(Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education, *PT Evaluative Criteria, Revised 2013*, p.ii)

Physical therapy has continued to evolve and to respond to the needs of society since its beginnings in the early 1900’s, *with physical therapists now practicing in a variety of clinical settings with unprecedented levels of professional responsibility. Physical therapists are integral members of the primary care team and are involved in prevention of disability and promotion of positive health, as well as acting as consultants in restorative care. Physical therapist practice today is based on a well-developed body of scientific and clinical knowledge. Physical therapists also apply knowledge from the basic, behavioral, and social sciences.* (Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education, *PT Evaluative Criteria, Revised 2013*, p. i)

Vision 2020 – adopted by House of Delegates, American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) in 2000.

Vision Sentence:

*By 2020, physical therapy will be provided by physical therapists who are doctors of physical therapy, recognized by consumers and other health care professionals as the practitioners of choice to whom consumers have direct access for the diagnosis of, interventions for, and prevention of impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities related to movement, function, and health.*

Vision Statement

*Physical therapy, by 2020, will be provided by physical therapists who are doctors of physical therapy and who may be board-certified specialists. Consumers will have direct access to physical therapists in all environments for patient/client management, prevention, and wellness services. Physical therapists will be practitioners of choice in clients’ health networks and will hold all privileges of autonomous practice. Physical therapists may be assisted by physical therapist assistants who are educated and licensed to provide physical therapist-directed and –supervised components of interventions.*

*Guided by integrity, life-long learning, and a commitment to comprehensive and accessible health programs for all people, physical therapists and physical therapist assistants will render evidence-based service throughout the continuum of care and improve quality of life for society. They will provide culturally sensitive care distinguished by trust, respect, and appreciation for individual differences.*

*While fully availing themselves of new technologies as well as basic and clinical research, physical therapists will continue to provide direct patient/client care. They will maintain active responsibility for the growth of the physical therapy profession and the health of the people it serves.* (<http://www.apta.org/Vision2020/> )

**ACCREDITATION:**

*The Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE or the Commission) is the only agency in the United States recognized to accredit education programs for the preparation of physical therapists. CAPTE attempts to ensure that accredited programs prepare graduates who will be effective contemporary practitioners of physical therapy*. The *CAPTE Accreditation Handbook and Evaluative Criteria* *for Accreditation of PT Programs* structure the review process.

**DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY DEGREE AT WCU:**

The Department of Physical Therapy (Department) at Western Carolina University (WCU) offers only one degree, an entry-level Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. Graduates of the program are prepared to take the *National Physical Therapy Examination* and meet the specified requirements for licensure in the state where they plan to practice, entering the profession as licensed practitioners. Successful applicants to the program must hold a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university, have completed specified pre-requisite courses, maintained a superior grade point average and performed well on the Graduate Record Examination.

Core documents of the physical therapy profession that guide the entry level education program at WCU include the following (all available on APTA webpage – [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org)):

1. *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice,* 2nd ed. Alexandria, VA: APTA; 2003 - describes the practice of physical therapy.
2. *A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Professional Education: Version 2004*. Alexandria, VA: APTA; 2004 - describes the profession’s “preferred prerogatives, perspectives, beliefs and values relative to physical therapist education [and is intended to] serve as a primary resource for CAPTE in its periodic review and assessment of the evaluative criteria for physical therapist educational programs.” (p. 5)
3. APTA *Code of Ethics*
4. APTA *Guide for Professional Conduct*
5. APTA *Standards of Practice*
6. APTA *Professionalism in Physical Therapy: Core Values*
7. APTA [*Minimum Required Skills of Physical Therapist Graduates at Entry-level*](http://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/About_Us/Policies/BOD/Education/MinReqSkillsPTGrad.pdf)
8. APTA *Vision 2020*
9. [Various publications of specialty sections within APTA on standards for entry-level education]

The program includes didactic instruction in the basic sciences, clinical sciences and behavioral sciences within the context of requirements for practice as an entry-level physical therapy clinician generalist.

**WCU MISSION, CORE VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES, AND VISION STATEMENT**

### WCU Mission:

*Western Carolina University creates engaged learning opportunities that incorporate teaching, research and service through residential, distance education and international experiences. The university focuses its academic programs, educational outreach, research and creative activities, and cultural activities to improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development in the region, state and nation.*

### WCU Core Values and Guiding Principles:

* *Excellence in Scholarship, Teaching, and Learning*
* *Collaboration with and Respect for our Communities*
* *Free and Open Interchange of Ideas*
* *Responsible Stewardship and Organizational Effectiveness*
* *Organizational and Environmental Sustainability*
* *Cultural Diversity and Equal Opportunity*

### WCU Vision Statement:

*To be a national model for student learning and engagement that embraces its responsibilities as a regionally engaged university.*

**WCU DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY PHILOSOPHY, PRINCIPLES AND VALUES, VISION, MISSION, GOALS, OUTCOMES, CURRICULUM MODEL AND EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

1. **PHILOSOPHY:**

* Students entering the physical therapy program have demonstrated academic excellence, a commitment to physical therapy as a career and value-centered behavior.
* Students are challenged to actively engage in the learning process.
* Teaching is the primary responsibility of faculty members and faculty are committed to continuous improvement.
* Faculty foster an environment in which students embrace their development as physical therapy practitioners and acquire the required knowledge, skills and professional behaviors to excel in their chosen profession.
* Faculty collaborate to build the knowledge, skills and abilities for graduates to utilize evidence to inform their clinical decision making..
* Faculty demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning and strive to instill the same commitment in their students.
* Consistent with the mission of the university (and voluntary Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching designation as a community-engaged institution), the faculty and students in the department strive to address community needs through collaboration and outreach.
* Scholarship and critical inquiry are essential to effective teaching and fundamental to faculty development.
* Change is inevitable and faculty and students must have the adaptability to respond constructively to change at a personal, professional and societal level.
* Faculty and students are sensitive to diversity, value the beliefs and contributions of diverse cultures and strive to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes optimal outcomes when interfacing with persons from diverse backgrounds.
* Faculty and students embrace APTA’s vision for the profession including an integral role for physical therapists in primary care and autonomous practice.
* Faculty value collaboration among clients, caregivers, other healthcare practitioners and related partners in the provision of care and actively promote opportunities for inter-professional education, service and scholarship.

1. **PRINCIPLES and VALUES:**

Faculty embrace the following principles and values, model them in their actions, and promote their development in students:

* Mutual respect
* Ethical/legal behavior
* Respect for diversity and equal opportunity
* Integrity
* Altruism
* Importance of life-long learning
* Positive attitude
* Collaboration
* Adaptability
* Continuous improvement

1. **VISION:**

The Department of Physical Therapy will be recognized in the region, state and nation as an outstanding physical therapist education program with quality faculty members, staff and students who value collaboration and community engagement to address societal needs.

1. **MISSION:**

The mission of the Department of Physical Therapy is to promote the advancement of health, wellness, and rehabilitation through education, research and service. Our commitment is to provide a student-focused environment with a faculty whose primary role is to prepare compassionate, competent doctors of physical therapy that uphold the highest professional standards across the continuum of care.

1. **GOALS:**

Students and Graduates will:

1. Practice as competent clinician generalists with patients/clients across the age span and in diverse clinical settings.
2. Interact with clients, patients, family, colleagues, health care team members and the community with respect, caring, compassion, sensitivity to differences, and strong communication skills.
3. Utilize available evidence to inform clinical decision making and assess outcomes of intervention.
4. Practice in a collaborative manner with patients/clients and their caregivers, with other healthcare practitioners and with representatives of various community organizations/agencies.
5. Incorporate effective instructional strategies, congruent with the needs of the learner, into patient/client management and community outreach activities.
6. Address community needs for health promotion.

Faculty will:

1. Demonstrate excellence in teaching, using diverse instructional strategies and providing both challenge and support for their learners.
2. Engage in scholarly activity and promote a culture of critical inquiry as the foundation for effective clinical practice.
3. Embrace the university’s mission as a regionally engaged university.
4. Actively engage in activities that develop their knowledge and abilities as teachers, scholars and service providers.
5. Respect individual differences and provide thoughtful, constructive feedback.

Program will:

1. Support the faculty’s professional aspirations in teaching, scholarship and service.
2. Promote inter-professional collaboration.
3. Be responsive to the needs of the community and supportive of efforts to address needs.
4. Promote free and open interchange of ideas.
5. Strive for organizational effectiveness and sustainability.
6. Comply with accreditation standards.
7. Engage in on-going assessment for continuous improvement.
8. **OUTCOMES**

**Student/Graduate Outcomes at Completion of Program:**

1. Demonstrate professional behavior consistent with APTA’s Core Values of accountability, altruism, compassion/caring, excellence, integrity, professional duty and social responsibility. [http://www.ptcas.org/Professionalism/]
2. Communicate (verbal, non-verbal and written) competently and effectively with various constituencies in ways congruent with situational needs. [from APTA *Clinical Performance Instrument]*
3. Act with consideration for individual differences, values, preferences and expressed needs.
4. Educate others using relevant and effective teaching methods. [from APTA *Clinical Performance Instrument*]
5. Manage patients/clients safely and effectively consistent with the expectations set forth in the *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice:*
   1. Select and conduct appropriate screening and examination tests/strategies (patient/client history, systems review, and tests/measures) and synthesize the results utilizing sound clinical judgment into a comprehensive evaluation.
   2. Determine (from the evaluation) a physical therapy diagnosis and prognosis.
   3. Establish a plan of care based on the patient’s/client’s unique needs and goals; consistent with evidence; and effective.
   4. Skillfully perform intervention with reassessment and adaptation as indicated.
   5. Assess outcomes of professional performance and intervention with patients/clients, both formally and informally.
6. Interact with other health care practitioners and service providers in a manner that reflects an understanding of complementary roles and that maximizes potential contributions of other providers toward the common goal of optimal patient/client care and health promotion.
7. Practice in a manner congruent with available research evidence, monitor outcomes and adjust intervention accordingly.
8. Promote health and quality of life by providing information on health promotion, fitness, and wellness within the scope of physical therapy practice and applying principles of health promotion to defined population groups.
9. Function responsibly and knowledgably within an organization in regards to various administrative and management parameters in accordance with regulatory and legal requirements.
10. Demonstrate behaviors consistent with lifelong learning.

Faculty Outcomes: Faculty will:

1. Demonstrate excellence in teaching as evidenced by results of a variety of evaluative measures and sources.
2. Disseminate the outcomes of their scholarly endeavors.
3. Serve the communities in which they function.
4. Participate in activities consistent with an inherent value for lifelong learning.

Program Outcomes: Program will:

1. Provide needed resources to support faculty in their teaching, scholarship and service endeavors.
2. Demonstrate inter-professional collaboration in teaching, scholarship and service.
3. Develop and comply with organizational policies, procedures and processes for efficient, effective and sustainable operation.
4. Maintain accreditation by Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education.
5. Assess major functions and utilize findings for continuous improvement.
6. **Description of Curriculum Model and Educational Principles on which professional curriculum is built**

WCU’s curriculum is best described as a traditional model built on a strong foundation of basic and physical therapy sciences and their application to various clinical conditions (organized by systems). Integration of knowledge, skills and abilities across the curriculum fosters the progressive development of more complex and applied clinical reasoning abilities. Knowledge about the physical therapy profession, the resources available through the professional organization and the professional behaviors essential in a physical therapy practitioner are developed through a four-course sequence in professional practice. Research methods and statistics, in a series of four courses, builds the knowledge and skills to access and apply scientific evidence to inform clinical decision making as well as to plan a research project (either basic science or translational research), assess outcomes, and disseminate the findings.

[Diagram 1: Conceptual Model of the Curriculum]

**8. Educational Principles**

Faculty adhere to these educational principles and practices. Good education practice encourages:

1. Student-faculty contact
2. Active learning
3. Cooperation among students, faculty and others
4. Diverse instructional and assessment strategies appropriate to the content
5. Clear, effective communication (both spoken and written) in a range of contexts
6. Learning experiences that foster critical thinking, clinical reasoning and problem solving
7. Appropriate balance between the basic sciences, applied sciences, research methodology/critical inquiry, behavioral sciences and supervised clinical practice
8. Disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills through study and research-based inquiry
9. High expectations for professional behavior with recognition that students need guidance to develop the wide range of professional behaviors required of a healthcare practitioner
10. Awareness and respect for individual differences
11. Integrity and academic honesty
12. Attitudes which value lifelong learning and development of the necessary skills in information literacy
13. Community service and engagement