

Needs Analysis Produced by State-Wide Provost Council

and Approved March 5th, 2019

Doctorate in Physical Therapy Program Proposals

Western Oregon University (WOU) and Oregon State University (through its OSU-Cascades campus) are currently proposing Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) programs, and OIT and OHSU will propose a jointly delivered DPT program proposal later this year. We unanimously approve WOU's and OSU-Cascade's DPT program proposals, with the agreement that we anticipate strongly supporting approval of OIT-OHSU's proposal, when it comes to the SPC. The SPC is also aware that given that the earliest a class of DPT graduates, from a public university, could enter the workforce is spring 2026, there should be fluidity in how we respond to this serious workforce and healthcare challenge.

In offering its endorsement, the SPC is mindful of the following:

- As of January 1, 2016, all new physical therapy programs that seek to be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) must be at the doctoral level. The Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) is the required degree for all entry-level physical therapists.
- Earning CAPTE accreditation is not guaranteed, and new programs—even if approved by HECC—face several years of development in order to prepare for accreditation and launch. HECC approval is a precursor to taking many of the actions necessary to prepare for accreditation.
- The earliest a class of DPT graduates from a public university in Oregon could enter the workforce is spring 2026.

Therefore, flexibility is needed in how the state responds to this serious workforce and healthcare challenge. Given an assessment of demand, which is strong (as outlined below), and the need to serve different regions of the state (see Figure 1), the SPC advises the HECC to approve several programs so that the sponsoring universities may move forward in the next steps toward accreditation. This points to a need for access to affordable PT training in the State of Oregon for Oregonians.

In considering these numbers, it is important to note that some graduates of Oregon's DPT programs will not remain in Oregon to practice. Moreover, the 2014 Oregon Health Professions Profile further reported the statewide number of people per therapist at 1,409, though there were 11 counties in the State of Oregon (most of them rural) that had 2,000 to 4,000 people per PT. In one county that ratio is 11,000 to 1.

Current Physical Therapy Programs

Oregon has two existing physical therapy programs, both offered by private universities: George Fox University and Pacific University. Both programs are at maximum capacity with George Fox enrolling 44 students per year and Pacific enrolling 50 students. Both programs accept students from across the country. Since many of the applicants are from out of state, in 2018 only 45 Oregon residents enrolled in these two programs (Physical Therapy Centralized Application Service, 2019).

Demand

The Statewide Provosts Council completed a review of the need for physical therapists in Oregon and determined that there is sufficient demand to justify and support multiple new proposed programs.

According to data compiled by the Oregon Health Authority, two Oregon counties do not have a licensed physical therapist (Gilliam and Sherman). Of the 3,234 therapists in Oregon in 2015 and 2016, 140 planned to leave the Oregon workforce, 236 planned to reduce their patient hours, while over half were working in excess of 40 hours per week. Thus, Oregon at that time was losing more physical therapists than its two existing programs could train (Oregon Health Authority, 2017). In addition, there is no evidence of a slowdown in either demand for PT or attrition from the existing population of therapists in the state.

Many PT positions have been open in Oregon for extended periods of time. Employers use a variety of web services to recruit new physical therapists, making the calculation of the precise estimate of the need for physical therapists in Oregon difficult. Table 1 below provides a listing of the number of physical therapy positions currently advertised in Oregon. While it's possible that there is overlap in these listings across web services, the numbers in Table 1 suggest a robust need for physical therapists in the state.

Table 1: Current listed PT job openings in Oregon (as of 2/26/2019)

Number of openings	Web Service	Region
571+	ZipRecruiter ¹	Statewide
683	LinkedIn ²	Portland Area
601	Glassdoor.com ³	Statewide
581	Monster.com ⁴	Statewide
572	Indeed.com ⁵	Statewide

¹ <https://www.ziprecruiter.com/candidate/search?search=physical+therapist&location=Oregon>

² <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/physical-therapist-jobs-portland-oregon-area/>

³

<https://www.glassdoor.com/Job/jobs.htm?suggestCount=0&suggestChosen=false&clickSource=searchBtn&typedKeyword=physical+therapy&sc.keyword=physical+therapy&locT=S&locId=3163&jobType=>

⁴ <https://www.monster.com/jobs/search/?q=physical-therapy&where=Oregon>

⁵ <https://www.indeed.com/q-Physical-Therapist-l-Oregon-jobs.html>

Clinical Training Sites

The most critical supply factor in successfully training new physical therapists is the availability of clinical training sites. These sites allow students to gain essential practical experiences and training that build upon didactic training that occurs in the classroom and in training laboratory courses.

According to a 2015-16 survey conducted by the Oregon Health Authority, there are 3,234 licensed physical therapists in Oregon. In Union County there are 23, in neighboring Umatilla County there are 44, while Wallowa, Grant and Baker counties add an additional 19 practitioners. Between Klamath and Jackson Counties alone there are 250 physical therapists. The Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook county area has 240 physical therapists. Clinical sites along the Interstate 5 corridor from Portland to the southern Willamette Valley will likely provide the majority of clinical sites.

Projected employment

Oregon	United States
2,950 2016 Employment	239,800 2016 Employment
3,760 2026 Employment	306,900 2026 Employment
27% Percent change	28% Percent change
220 Annual projected job openings	17,700 Annual projected job openings

From www.careeronestop.org, which is sponsored by U.S. Department of Labor.

Facilities

As DPT Programs are developed, there will be significant expense in the facilities needed to support them. Some universities may use existing buildings; others might need new or renovated facilities. If state funds are used to build state of the art facilities, that could keep tuition down relative to private universities, thereby increasing access. Development of additional public university program sites will increase access to greater numbers of clinical placement sites throughout Oregon, maximizing the number of DPT graduates and the areas served.