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HB 2871 - May 6, 2019

The Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education (or CAPTE) is the accrediting body for both Doctor of Physical Therapy and Physical Therapy Assistant Programs, and is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. CAPTE sets a very high bar for the quality of curriculum, faculty and graduates. If any Oregon public institution gets approved to offer a DPT program, we can be sure that the program will have met CAPTE's high standards. WOU has worked with well-known consultants to help draft a high quality curriculum that is aligned with CAPTE standards.

The State-wide Provost Council conducted a prolonged review of the need for increased DPT capacity in Oregon, before unanimously approving both OSU-Cascades and WOU's DPT program proposals. The State-wide Provost Council produced a document summarizing the need for greater capacity in our state's DPT pipeline. One of the salient findings was that between 2016 and 2026, Oregon is projected to need 27% more physical therapists, which is over 800 new professionals. And, the Oregon Health Authority concluded in 2017 that Oregon is losing more PTs than are being produced by existing programs, largely because of retirements. Currently there appears to be well over 500 openings for PTs in Oregon.

WOU's proposed DPT program will serve an unmet state need and is consistent with WOU's Mission and success in healthcare preparation programs (e.g., Master in Rehab Counseling, Gerontology, Pre-Physical Therapy, Pre-Occupational Therapy, Pre-Nursing, Community Health, Gerontology and Exercise Science). WOU's DPT Program will primarily serve the educational needs of the Mid Willamette Valley, which is where the vast majority of our students' clinical placements sites would be. In conclusion, I want to point out that in the nearly quarter century since ORS 352.011 was written, a bachelor degree is now needed to open the doors that an associate degree previously opened. And, a master degree is often needed to open the doors that a bachelor degree previously opened. And quite literally, in the case of physical therapy a doctorate is now needed for what a master degree could do in 1997. I urge you to support the Dash-2 amendment to HB 2871 and the educational and health care needs of Oregonians.