

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

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The Department of Physical Therapy was established in 1931 to provide basic preparation for the practice of physical therapy. Between 1931 and 1954, the program consisted of a 12-month professional course designed to train students for entry into the profession. This program was based upon at least three years of college work or the possession of a registered nurse certificate. A two-year professional program after two years of preparatory college work was initiated in 1954. This program led to the degree of Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy. In 1968, the Department of Physical Therapy became part of the then-School of Allied Health Professions. The two-year professional program leading to the Bachelor of Science degree continued through the 1988-89 academic year.

In August 1989, the department began a three-year professional program based on three years of previous college work that leads to a Master of Science degree. On Feb. 8, 2001 the VCU Board of Visitors approved a proposal to offer a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) as the entry-level professional degree. The State Council of Higher Education in Virginia gave its final approval for the proposal on June 20, 2001. The first class to study the DPT program began in July 2002.

In addition to the professional program, the department participates in three collaborative and interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs.

Mission

The mission of the VCU Department of Physical Therapy is to serve the commonwealth of Virginia and the nation by:

- Advancing excellence in entry-level and post-entry-level education
- Generating innovative scientific discovery
- Impacting the health of the community through leadership

Philosophy

Physical therapy is an integral part of the health care system. Expanding knowledge in the basic and clinical sciences, and changes in the needs and mandates of society, continually place new demands on the physical therapy profession. The faculty of the Department of Physical Therapy is committed to providing educational programs responsive to expanding knowledge and the needs of society.

The primary principle directing the activities of the department is the faculty's commitment to optimal patient care through physical therapy education, research and practice. The faculty strongly believes that physical therapists must have a thorough understanding of the theory and evidence that form the basis of contemporary patient/client management. In addition, physical therapists must be excellent problem-solvers and must demonstrate the highest levels of professionalism in their interactions with patients/clients, families and colleagues. The faculty also believes that physical therapists have a responsibility to develop skills for lifelong learning and to engage in service to the profession and to their communities.

Objectives

The objectives of the Department of Physical Therapy, in concert with the mission of the university and the College of Health Professions, are to:

- Provide an entry-level post-baccalaureate educational program for full-time students with diverse backgrounds and experiences
- Contribute to interdisciplinary post-professional doctoral programs that prepare physical therapists to contribute to the understanding and application of therapeutic procedures through basic and applied research and to teach both clinical and didactic physical therapy on all academic levels
- Provide an atmosphere that fosters critical thinking, intellectual curiosity and integrity, freedom of expression, personal growth and professional competence, and a commitment to learning for faculty and students
- Provide an environment that facilitates research and scholarship directed toward optimizing patient care
- Provide services to the public and professional communities

Facilities

The educational facilities for the VCU Department of Physical Therapy are located on the 4th floor of the College of Health Professions building at 900 E. Leigh St. The administrative and faculty offices, classrooms, physical therapy instructional and research laboratories and student locker rooms are located in this space. The VCU College of Health Professions building opened in the summer of 2019 and is located next to the Larrick Student Center, which features a fitness center (cardio, selectorized and free-weight equipment), recreation and aquatic center (indoor 25-meter heated pool), two-court basketball gym, racquetball courts and a food court.

Clinical education experiences for professional students are offered in physical therapy clinics throughout Virginia and the country.

Graduate (post-professional) programs in physical therapy

The Department of Physical Therapy is committed to improving physical therapy services through graduate education and research. The department participates in cooperative and interdisciplinary doctoral programs. An interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Rehabilitation and Movement Science is offered in conjunction with two other departments at VCU: the Department of Kinesiology and Health Sciences in the College of Humanities and Sciences and the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in the School of Medicine. Also, the department participates in the College of Health Professions' Ph.D. in Health Related Sciences.

Education at the Ph.D. level is a highly independent adventure. The curricula offered by the Department of Physical Therapy through joint ventures with other departments allow students the opportunity to focus on highly divergent aspects of research related to physical therapy. Each of the programs also offers students opportunity to hone teaching skills in preparation for a well-rounded academic career.

Regardless of the chosen program or track, each Ph.D. student conducts a substantial original research project. Individuals interested in doctoral education are encouraged to examine the research interest areas of faculty in each of the participating departments and to consult with

the program directors before submitting their application to a specific program.

Admission requirements

Applications are encouraged from individuals who are practicing physical therapists. Applicants must have graduated from a physical therapy educational program approved by the American Physical Therapy Association. International students must have an equivalent level of education as determined by the International Admissions. Individuals who are not physical therapists are not accepted into the advanced degree programs.

Additional admission requirements for graduate study in the Department of Physical Therapy are as follows:

1. A minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale for entry-level professional education
2. Satisfactory score on the general test of the GRE (taken no more than five years prior to admission)
3. Three satisfactory letters of recommendation
4. Applicant's written statement of intent for pursuing graduate studies in a particular program
5. Such additional requirements as established for each specific program

International students also must score a 600 or above on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (250 on computer-based test).

Financial assistance

Some teaching and research assistantships are available from the department. These assistantships are competitive. Part-time employment as a physical therapy clinician is available in Richmond and surrounding areas. Doctoral students receiving stipends must receive approval of outside employment.

VCU provides three types of student assistance: scholarships, loans and work-study. For information on these types of financial assistance, write to the Office of Financial Aid, Virginia Commonwealth University, MCV Campus, Richmond, VA 23298-0244.

Priority consideration is given to applications received by Jan. 9.

Students who complete the requirements for the below will receive a Doctor of Physical Therapy.

- Physical Therapy, Doctor of (D.P.T.) (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/physical-therapy/physical-therapy-dpt/>)

Students who complete the requirements for the below will receive a Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation and Movement Science.

- Rehabilitation and Movement Science, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) with a concentration in applied physiology (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/physical-therapy/rehabilitation-movement-science-phd-concentration-exercise-physiology/>)
- Rehabilitation and Movement Science, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) with a concentration in neuromusculoskeletal dynamics (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/physical-therapy/rehabilitation-movement-science-phd-concentration-neuromusculoskeletal-dynamics/>)