

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
REGENTS COMMUNICATION**

**ACTION REQUEST**

**SUBJECT:** Joint Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)/Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Physical Therapy Degree at the University of Michigan-Flint

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Approval to grant the joint Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Physical Therapy Degree through the School of Health Professions and Studies at the University of Michigan-Flint

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Fall 2013

The School of Health Professions and Studies at the University of Michigan-Flint currently offers the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. The DPT degree is the first professional, clinical degree to enter physical therapy practice. The DPT degree does not prepare physical therapists for tenured faculty positions in colleges and/or universities. The School of Health Professions and Studies proposes to expand the existing Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree with a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Physical Therapy degree by offering a joint DPT/PhD in Physical Therapy (PT). The proposed graduate program will create the next generation of faculty with an emphasis on academic leadership and research. The proposed DPT/Ph.D. program is designed to meet the growing need for physical therapy faculty members who are prepared to conduct and mentor research and be future leaders of academic programs.

The field of physical therapy has been in transition for the past two decades with respect to the requirements to enter into practice as well as to obtain tenure-track faculty positions. The Bureau of Labor Statistics not only describes a nationwide shortage of physical therapists, but indicates that the demand is expected to spike upward by an astonishing 30% between 2008 and 2018. The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth identified physical therapists as one of the top 50 jobs in the State. The shortage of qualified faculty has been a persistent issue in PT and PT assistant educational programs for more than 25 years and the need will only intensify with the anticipated demand of physical therapists coupled with the fact that just over 50% of current full-time faculty are near and/or at retirement age. In addition, of the 1,929 full-time faculty in professional PT Programs (entry to profession), 11% are also enrolled in doctoral education as of 2010.

The primary audience for the proposed program is Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students (entry-level clinical doctorate) who wish to jointly pursue an academic, terminal doctoral degree (Ph.D.). This joint degree program is designed for those individuals who wish to be educated as physical therapists, but ultimately aspire to academic teaching and research careers in physical therapy. The graduates of the joint degree program will not only have the credentials but also the skills needed for successful careers in academia. The initial target group for this joint DPT/Ph.D. program will be University of Michigan-Flint students; however, because of a limited number of programs like the one proposed across the nation, expansion of the joint terminal degree program is expected over a very short period of time.

The proposed joint DPT/Ph.D. program requirements will build on the professional DPT and the five Residency/Certificate programs currently offered in the DPT program at Flint. Out of the 50 credit hours, 18 credit hours will be based on specialization coursework (beyond DPT), 12 credit hours of research design and statistics, 6 credit hours in educational leadership and engagement, and 14 credit hours of Ph.D. research seminar and dissertation research. Coursework is designed in two parallel tracks of advanced practice and research with an additional required core in academic leadership and engagement rounding out the required curriculum. The 18 credits of advanced practice tracks will provide students with expertise in an area of

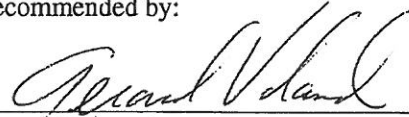
clinical specialization of orthopedic PT, neurologic PT, geriatric PT, cardiovascular and pulmonary PT, and pediatric PT. It is assumed that most students enrolled in the program will be full-time, taking eight credits for five semesters, one semester of five credits during which they will take their comprehensive examinations including their dissertation proposal, and an additional five credits/semester(s) as needed to complete their dissertation research.

There are no Ph.D. programs in physical therapy in Michigan. There are 18 terminal degree programs offered at 15 institutions in 19 mid-western states accredited by the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission. Eight (8) of these terminal degree programs are Ph.D. degree programs. The University of Michigan-Flint will be one of only two programs in the nation to offer this joint degree in which DPT academic credit will contribute, in part, to the fulfillment of a Ph.D.

The proposed joint Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) /Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Physical Therapy degree has been thoroughly reviewed and supported by the UM-Flint Department of Physical Therapy, School of Health Professions and Studies, UM-Flint Graduate Programs Committee, Academic Affairs Advisory Committee, Chancellor's Advisory Committee for Budget and Strategic Planning, Academic Assessment Committee, the provost and chancellor. The program will be implemented upon approval from the Presidents Council of State Universities of Michigan, the Higher Learning Commission, and pending the Board of Regents approval.

Based upon the extensive research and plans that have been completed, the University of Michigan-Flint requests approval to grant the joint Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)/Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Physical Therapy degree through the School of Health Professions and Studies at the University of Michigan-Flint, effective as of Fall 2013.

Recommended by:

  
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Gerard Voland, Provost and  
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

July 2012

Recommendation endorsed by:

  
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Ruth J. Person, Chancellor  
University of Michigan-Flint