

THE PHYSICAL THERAPY PROFESSION

The primary objectives of physical therapy are to promote human health and function by assessing and treating injuries or disabilities and promoting wellness to individuals of all ages. The physical therapist conducts physical evaluations to determine the patient's potential for rehabilitation and life style changes, and also educates the patient and family. Physical therapists treat patients recovering from injury, surgery, or disease, using means such as exercise, performance of functional mobility activities, manual techniques, and physical agents. They teach patients how to remain healthy, prevent injury, and stay physically active. Physical therapists work in a variety of environments, including elementary and high schools, sports clinics, veterans' rehabilitation centers, hospitals, home health care, and nursing homes.

UNDERGRADUATE PREPARATION

Most physical therapy schools require the completion of a bachelor's degree prior to admission to their program. Typically, any major is acceptable. The most common undergraduate majors among physical therapy students include exercise science, biology, chemistry, and psychology. In selecting a college major, consider how you will satisfactorily complete the pre-requisite courses for your desired Physical Therapy graduate program, in addition to graduation requirements of Nebraska Wesleyan University.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED COURSES

Although there is no required undergraduate major for entering the field of physical therapy, each institution will have a required list of pre-requisite coursework that must be completed. Some programs accept AP/CLEP/other transfer credits, while other programs do not. To the right is a list of general courses and credits for physical therapy based on UNMC requirements. Students should research their desired graduate school directly for specific pre-requisite requirements, transfer equivalencies, or other questions.

Courses	Credits
Biological Sciences	14
Chemistry	8
Statistics	3-4
Psychology	3
Physics	8
Social Sciences	3

BEYOND ACADEMICS

Pre-physical therapy students are encouraged to participate in experiences, such as leadership activities, volunteer opportunities, research, and shadowing of professionals, which will help prepare them for physical therapy school and the physical therapy profession. Activities beyond the classroom play a significant role in a student's application to a professional school program. Such experiences demonstrate a commitment to and knowledge of the profession. In particular, shadowing physical therapists will help students learn more about the daily activities of the physical therapy profession.

At Nebraska Wesleyan University, student organizations that may be interesting or useful to students looking into the physical therapy field include the American Red Cross Club, Athletic Training Students Association, Beta Beta Beta (Biology Honorary), Colleges Against Cancer, Health and Human Performance Club, Phi Epsilon Kappa (Health and Human Performance Honorary), Pre-Health Club, and Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.

Some physical therapy schools require a minimum number of observation hours for admission. For example, students who intend to matriculate to Creighton University's Physical Therapy program are required to complete a minimum of 60 hours of observation supervised by a physical therapist. Documentation of the observation experiences is required.

PHYSICAL THERAPY EDUCATION

There are over 250 accredited physical therapy schools in the United States that offer the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. Schools in Nebraska offering such programs include Creighton University, the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), and College of St. Mary. The total number of credit hours may vary from school to school. Some institutions offer joint degrees, post-doctoral residencies, and fellowships. Practical experience is important, so all physical therapy programs have dedicated time spent on clinical education and other training opportunities, rather than just focusing on classroom and lab study.

APPLICATION & ADMISSION

1. Applications to Physical Therapy programs are completed through the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Services (PTCAS). Through PTCAS, you can select the specific schools you would like to apply to, and send your application directly through the site.
2. Many schools require applicants to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Consider taking the GRE 12-16 months before you intend to start PT school. More information at www.ets.org.
3. Note that many schools require letters of recommendation, a personal statement, and interviews for admission.

Regional Schools	Credit Requirement	Avg. GRE Score	Avg. GPA	Degree Offered
UNMC	Bachelor's Degree	Verbal- 152 Quantitative- 153	3.72	DPT
Creighton University	90 hours	Not required	3.62	DPT
College of St. Mary	Bachelor's Degree	Not required	3.42	DPT
Des Moines University	Bachelor's Degree	Verbal- 152 Quantitative- 152	3.68	DPT
Rockhurst University	Bachelor's Degree	Not required	3.66	DPT
University of Kansas	Bachelor's Degree	Not required	3.7	DPT

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://explorehealthcareers.org> (Explore Health Careers)

<http://apta.org> (American Physical Therapy Association)

<http://www.ptcas.org>

(Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service)

<http://www.ets.org> (Educational Testing Service)

<http://www.caahep.org>

(Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs)

How do I connect with NWU alumni in the physical therapy profession?

Visit career.nebrwesleyan.edu and scroll down to "Career Assistance Network". Use this database to find alumni in this profession and see their current position titles and employers. Feel free to reach out!