PREPARING FOR THE DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM

Physical therapy is only available at the graduate level, so in order to become a physical therapist, you must first obtain your baccalaureate degree. All majors are potentially relevant to the practice of physical therapy, so there is no preferred major. The faculty members of the physical therapy program embrace the value that diversity in all dimensions, including diversity of majors, is valuable to any medical education program. Admission to the physical therapy program requires a minimum 3.0 GPA in undergraduate work. There are some specific prerequisite courses that you must complete in order to be admitted to the physical therapy program, so you must plan on taking these prerequisites while working toward your undergraduate degree. Some of them may fulfill core or major requirements, depending on your specific major. Otherwise, they will count as elective courses.

Prerequisite courses required for admission to the physical therapy program:

1. Fundamentals of Chemistry I, II (CHEM 110/111) or equivalent
2. General College Physics (PHYS 111/112) or equivalent
3. Human Anatomy and Physiology (EXSC 221/222) or equivalent. (While human anatomy and physiology are preferred, students may substitute vertebrate or comparative anatomy and physiology.)
4. Elements of Applied Statistics (MATH 160) or equivalent.
5. A course in psychology or sociology emphasizing human behavior or disability. Puget Sound courses that fulfill the requirement include Introduction to Psychology (Psychology 101); Abnormal Psychology (Psych 295); Deviance and Social Control (CSOC 206); and Disability, Identity, and Power (CSOC 370).

All prerequisite courses must be taken for a grade, and you must earn at least a grade of C in each course. The grades from Physics and Anatomy courses must average to B or better with no single grade less than C.

Other admissions requirements:

1. Graduate Record Examination scores that are not more than 5 years old.
2. Application to the physical therapy program, which includes essay and short answer questions, and submission of recommendation forms.
3. Exposure to practice of physical therapy (either volunteer or paid) under the supervision of a licensed physical therapist. There is no minimum number of hours, but the applicant must demonstrate understanding of the roles of physical therapists in the program application.

All application materials are due by January 15 of the year preceding entry into the physical therapy program. Prerequisite courses may be in-progress at the time of application, but must be completed before beginning physical therapy classes. The physical therapy admissions committee takes the overall application into account. Decisions are made based on a balance of academic performance in undergraduate work, GRE scores, understanding of the nature of the profession, answers to short answer questions on the application, writing ability as demonstrated in application essay and short answer questions, and information contained in the personal references. You must achieve all published minimum criteria in order to be considered for admission.

Is physical therapy a match for you?

How can you know? Find out everything you can about physical therapy, about other potential careers, and about yourself. You can find out about physical therapy by volunteering to observe or help in clinics where physical therapy is practiced. Such clinics may be found in hospitals, public schools, nursing homes, and private practices. You should obtain exposure to a variety of physical therapy practice settings, including orthopedics, long-term rehabilitation, and pediatrics. All volunteer work must be directly supervised by a registered physical therapist.

University of Puget Sound undergraduates are welcome to come and meet with physical therapy faculty members, and arrange to observe a class or two as a way of exploring interest in physical therapy. To arrange such a visit, call the physical therapy office at extension 3281.

A good place to explore your own career interests is in the Office of Career and Employment Services (Howarth 101) where you may sign up for a computer-based interest inventory. These programs are very easy to use and help you identify potential careers that match your talents and interests. The staff in the Office of Career and Employment Services can help you get started on it.