

Doctorate program achieves benchmark

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RADFORD - The Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) has awarded Radford University's new Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) program "Candidacy Approval" in the multi-step accreditation process.

Achieving this benchmark means the university can begin admitting its first class of students for the program, which will begin in June 2011.

"This is a major milestone in the development of our portfolio of advanced academic programs in the allied health sciences," said Radford University President Penelope W. Kyle. "We're very pleased to be able to provide the people of southside and southwest Virginia with both the educational opportunities and the urgently needed healthcare professionals that they need and deserve."

In September 2010, Radford University, Carilion Clinic, and the Jefferson College of Health Sciences (JCHS) announced that RU would base the DPT program in

Roanoke, in order to take advantage of the clinical and educational opportunities associated with JCHS, Carilion Clinic, the Virginia Tech-Carilion Medical School and other entities in the growing regional healthcare center.

Radford University is leasing approximately 7,900 square feet of space on the JCHS campus, including classrooms and labs, offices, student lounge and lockers, conference areas and other spaces, in order to accommodate the program.

"Earning 'Candidacy Approval' is an important validation of quality," said Raymond Linville, dean of the Waldron College of Health and Human Services. "Program Director Dr. Ed Swanson and a number of very dedicated faculty and staff members have worked hard to establish a very high-quality academic program in a particularly high-demand sector of modern healthcare. We're proud of everyone who has helped us achieve this goal and look forward to launching the program."

The DPT program is expected to enroll 15 students during the first year and 25 students per year in subsequent years. At full enrollment, the program will enroll 75 students, according to Swanson.

Most students will enter the program with a baccalaureate degree concentrated in the basic sciences, according to Swanson, who has been working on the development of the program for the past year and a half. The DPT program will

require 36 months of study, the curriculum will include 120 credit hours, and the program will emphasize an interdisciplinary, collaborative approach toward healthcare.

Physical therapists design and implement clinical services that restore function, regain movement, alleviate pain, and prevent injury. Electrical, thermal, and mechanical devices are often used in conjunction with specific motion or traction to facilitate recovery. They work closely with other healthcare professionals including physicians, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, social workers, educators, nutritionists, and nurses to enhance the quality of life.

Experts predict demand for physical therapists will grow substantially in the years ahead for a variety of reasons. The U.S. Administration on Aging has projected a 20 percent increase in the population over the age of 65 – or approximately 70 million elderly citizens by 2030.

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The nation's growing geriatric population will need professional care to restore function, regain movement, prevent injury, and alleviate aging-associated discomfort. In southwest Virginia, about 18 percent of the population is 65 or older, which makes the region one of the "oldest" in the commonwealth. Sports-related injuries, automobile accidents, and military trauma are other factors behind the need for more and better-trained physical therapists.

The DPT, as compared to the Ph.D., is a practice-oriented doctoral program that educates practitioners as opposed to teachers and researchers. The DPT degree programs are practitioner/scholar models with an emphasis on clinical education and the application of research to clinical practice. Radford University's Doctorate of Physical Therapy degree is designed specifically for students interested in a professional career within rehabilitation settings and institutions where clinical supervision, as well as the direct application of therapy and assessments, is mandated by licensure regulations.

Private support has played an important role in Radford University's ability

to establish the new program, according to Kyle. A \$500,000 gift from Roanoke-based Medical Facilities of America played a critical role in the initiative, and Pennsylvania-based Genesis Rehab provided \$100,000 in financial support.

The Friendship Retirement Community Doctorate of Physical Therapy Endowed Scholarship, in the amount of \$30,000, has recently been established as the program's first endowed scholarship. Friendship Manor in Roanoke is one of several sites where RU students enrolled in the program will receive clinical education.

Radford University's Waldron College of Health and Human Services is home to three of the new graduate programs in the clinical healthcare fields that Radford University has established over the past few years. The college enrolled its charter class for a new Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) in fall 2010 and launched a Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program in fall 2009. The Doctor of Psychology degree in counseling psychology, which began enrollment in fall 2008, is housed in the College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences.