

Why choose Carlow's DPT program?

Choosing the right program is one of the most important decisions a student makes in their professional journey. There are several factors that go into it. Starting with program location, cost, duration, reputation, delivery format, program faculty, educational philosophy, and most importantly, program curriculum. It is the learning experience embedded within the curriculum that prepares a student for a successful career.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching conducted a study on the educational curricula of five professions (Medicine, Nursing, Engineering, Law, and Clergy) and found that the higher education institutions were training students well in the knowledge (Head) and the skill (Hand) of the profession but lacking the education on the professional formation/responsibilities (Heart).^{1,2} This professional formation is considered a key element for any professional whose work directly or indirectly affects human beings.^{1,2} Physical therapy educational researchers conducted a study on this concept and found similar results.² They called for a reform in physical therapy curricula to equally emphasize the habits of the Heart, Head, and Hand.¹ Since then, physical therapy programs across the country have been reviewing and revising their respective curriculum to incorporate habits of the heart.

At Carlow University, we got a unique opportunity to build our curriculum from scratch. We had the opportunity to create a curriculum that prepares our graduates for the future of healthcare, which is dynamic and continuously evolving. We created a curriculum that provides equal emphasis on all three aspects of professional education: **Heart, Head, and Hand**

Our curriculum provides education and training in all key aspects of physical therapy. The students will learn to become comprehensive healthcare professionals who use their critical thinking skills to apply the principles of evidence-informed practice to their clinical practice when treating patients with:

- Musculoskeletal
- Neuromuscular
- Cardiopulmonary, and other systems disorders.

Our students will have the opportunity to participate in clinical experiences in a wide variety of clinical settings, so they are confident and competent to work in the area of their interest.

We strongly believe that we have one of the most comprehensive curricula among all the physical therapy programs in the country. We would train our graduates to develop a holistic approach to their plan of care. Some of the unique aspects of our curriculum are as follows:

- **Interprofessional Courses:** We have created a series of three inter-professional education courses (IPE I, II, and III) that students will take starting their first semester in the program with Occupational therapy, Speech-Language Pathology, and Physician Assistant students. These courses will allow students to learn to work in teams. Our goal is to add students from other professional courses to provide more comprehensive learning experiences to our students.

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- **Lifestyle Medicine:** In this course (Art of Healthy Living), students learn to incorporate concepts of lifestyle medicine, in particular, nutrition, physical activity, stress management, sleep hygiene, avoidance of risky substances, and embracing positive social connections in life in their plan of care.
- **Health Humanities:** We have collaborated with the Departments of English, Art, and Communication to develop a series of three courses (Art of healing I, II, and III) that students take in their second year to learn techniques to grow in their empathy and compassion through art, cinema, and literature and its impact on their patient's lives and their ability to heal.
- **Community Health and Service Learning:** We expect our graduates to contribute to community health by going above and beyond treating patients in their respective clinical settings. We created an interprofessional course (Health Promotion in Families and Communities) that our students will take with Nurse Practitioner students to learn how social determinants, like the living situation of a person, affects their overall health and what measures we can take to improve the quality of health of the communities we live in and work. Sharing classroom space with current healthcare professionals would be a unique experience for our students that may only be available in the Carlow DPT program. Students will also have opportunities to go on service-learning trips during the program with other healthcare professionals' students to learn with and from them.
- **Leadership and Entrepreneurship:** We believe in developing leaders who advocate for their patients but also advocate for our profession. We want our graduates to become community/business leaders and entrepreneurs. We have collaborated with the Nurse Practitioner and MBA programs to offer courses in business leadership (Strategic Analysis and Quality and Data Analytics), organizational leadership, and public leadership (Health Policy and Economics) to prepare them beyond clinical practice. Students will take these interprofessional courses with MBA and Nurse Practitioner students giving them a unique opportunity to exchange ideas with professionals currently in the workforce.
- **Community Service and Pro-Bono clinic:** Experiential learning is a hallmark of the Carlow DPT program and serves as a truly unique opportunity for our doctoral candidates. Carlow University is a community that comprises undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, an early learning center, campus elementary and middle school, and Sisters of Mercy. It gives students an on-campus opportunity to serve the community across the lifespan. We also plan to start a faculty and student-led pro-bono clinic to serve the underserved within the Pittsburgh community.
- **International Clinical Experience:** We are developing clinical partnerships across the globe to provide opportunities for students to complete one of their clinical experiences internationally to experience a healthcare environment in a different culture. This experience would help them differentiate the strengths and challenges of the United States healthcare system. We hope our graduates will use the learnings from these experiences to develop innovative ideas to overcome challenges in their clinical practice.

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A program with the most comprehensive curriculum should be the most important criterion when choosing a program. We make a strong case to all the physical therapy student candidates who are looking for a quality education that addresses the current skill gaps in physical therapy education and prepares students for the future demands of healthcare along with individualized attention due to the very small class size (28 students), we believe that the Carlow Doctor of Physical Therapy Program should be the program of choice.

References:

1. Jensen GM, Hack LM, Nordstrom T, et al. National study of excellence and innovation in physical therapist education: Part 2—a call to reform. *Phys Ther.* 2017;97(9):875-888.
2. Jensen GM, Nordstrom T, Mostrom E, et al. National study of excellence and innovation in physical therapist education: part 1—design, method, and results. *Phys Ther.* 2017;97(9):857-874.

Pre-accreditation Statement:

Graduation from a physical therapist education program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), 3030 Potomac Ave., Suite 100, Alexandria, Virginia 22305-3085; phone; 703-706-3245; accreditation@apta.org is necessary for eligibility to sit for the licensure examination, which is required in all states. Carlow University is seeking accreditation of a new physical therapist education program from CAPTE. The program is planning to submit an Application for Candidacy, which is the formal application required in the pre-accreditation stage, on December 1, 2022. Submission of this document does not assure that the program will be granted Candidate for Accreditation status. Achievement of Candidate for Accreditation status is required prior to implementation of the professional/technical (DPT) phase of the program; therefore, no students may be enrolled in professional/technical (DPT) courses until Candidate for Accreditation status has been achieved. Further, though achievement of Candidate for Accreditation status signifies satisfactory progress toward accreditation, it does not assure that the program will be granted accreditation.



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carlow.edu/dpt