CARLOW UNIVERSITY
Devoted to the Future of You.

Doctor of Physical Therapy

The Science of Healing. The Heart of Caring.

Our Program Philosophy and Educational Principles

Head. Hand. Heart.

Great physical therapists do more than know science. They apply it skillfully and connect with people compassionately.

Carlow's educational philosophy integrates three essential dimensions of professional development:

HEAD (Think Critically): Build scientific knowledge, evaluate research, and develop the clinical reasoning to make informed decisions.

HAND (Practice Skillfully): Develop practical skills through laboratory instruction, clinical coursework, simulation, and hands-on clinical experiences.

HEART (Care Compassionately): Cultivate empathy, ethical responsibility, and respect for every person's dignity, experiences, and goals.

These three dimensions work together. Knowledge guides your decisions, skill turns knowledge into action, and compassion keeps the person at the center of care.

Five Principles That Guide Us

1. Equity matters. Every person deserves dignity, respect, and fair access to healthcare.

2. Health extends beyond the clinic. Individual care and community health promotion are both essential to improving well-being.

3. Everyone can lead. Physical therapists need the confidence and adaptability to contribute to a changing healthcare environment.

4. Evidence and people belong together. The best clinical decisions integrate research evidence, clinical expertise, and each patient's beliefs, values, and preferences.

5. Clinical excellence is essential. Graduates must develop competencies that meet contemporary physical therapy practice standards.

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Three Ideas That Shape How You Learn

1. Social Reconstruction; Learn to Make a Difference

Education can help improve society. Through learning about healthcare equity, social determinants of health, policy, leadership, and the human experience of suffering, students explore how physical therapists can advocate for individuals and communities.

2. Constructivism; Build Knowledge That Lasts

New learning builds on what you already know. Carlow connects concepts across courses and uses active learning to help students apply, analyze, and synthesize information—not simply memorize it.

3. Cognitive Load Theory; Make Space for Deeper Learning

Learning complex material takes time. Carlow's Fall and Spring semesters are divided into two eight-week sessions, generally allowing students to focus on four to five courses per session rather than managing all semester courses simultaneously.

What Makes This Philosophy Different?

Our approach intentionally develops the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective dimensions of physical therapy education: what you know, what you can do, and how you care for others.

Health humanities, interprofessional learning, clinical practice, and community-focused experiences help bring these dimensions together.

More Than What You Know

We want you to leave Carlow with more than a strong foundation in physical therapy. We want you to have the judgment to make sound decisions, the skills to provide excellent care, and the compassion to recognize the human story behind every patient.

At Carlow, becoming a great physical therapist means developing your Head, Hand, and Heart.

Accreditation Statement:
The Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Carlow University is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), 3030 Potomac Ave., Suite 100, Alexandria, Virginia 22305-3085; telephone: 703-706-3245; email: accreditationsupport@apta.org ; website: https://www.capteonline.org. If needing to contact the program/institution directly, please call 412-578-6317 or email: dptprogram@carlow.edu

➔ Learn more about our DPT program:
carlow.edu/dpt