PRE-PHYSICAL THERAPY

JMU Pre-Professional Health Programs

GENERAL INFORMATION
Physical therapy is a health care profession designed to enhance the quality of life through the assessment, evaluation and rehabilitation of a variety of anatomical and neuromuscular functions. Licensed physical therapists commonly provide services in a variety of settings, including but not limited to hospitals, private clinics, school systems, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes and community health centers. There are more than 200 colleges and universities offering educational programs in physical therapy. It is the vision of the profession that by the year 2020, physical therapy will be provided by doctors of physical therapy (DPT), recognized by consumers and other health care professionals as practitioners of choice to whom consumers have direct access for the diagnosis of, interventions for, and prevention of impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities related to movement, function, and health. Further information can be found at the American Physical Therapy Association’s web site (http://www.apta.org).

CHOOSING A MAJOR
There is no specific major that is required to apply to physical therapy programs. Students are free to select any major that is of interest. However, there are some majors that include many of the prerequisites commonly associated with physical therapy programs. Choosing such a major may reduce the number of courses needed to both earn a degree and meet a particular physical therapy prerequisite regimen.

PREREQUISITES
All physical therapy programs have a set of prerequisite courses and experiences that vary and may be unique to the particular program. James Madison University offers a pre-physical therapy program that contains many of the prerequisites commonly required by physical therapy schools. It is important for students to inquire about prerequisite coursework from each individual school.

General requirements for admission to physical therapy school can be met at JMU with the following coursework:

- **BIO 270** Human Physiology (4 credit hours)
- **BIO 290** Human Anatomy (4 credit hours)
- **CHEM 131/132** General Chemistry (8 credit hours; including laboratory 131L-132L)
- **PHYS 140/150** General Physics (8 credit hours; including laboratory 140L-150L)
- **HTH 390** Introduction to PT (1 credit hour)
- **GPSYC 101** General Psychology (3 credit hours)
- **GPSYC 160** Life Span Human Development (3 credit hours)
- **PSYC 250** Abnormal Psychology (3 credit hours)
- **MATH 220** Elementary Statistics (3 credit hours)
- **MATH 205** Introductory Calculus (3 credit hours)
- **GSOC 210** Social Issues in a Global Context (3 credit hours)
- **ENGLISH** (literature, composition or scientific writing) (6 credit hours)

*Please note physical therapy schools often have varying Pre-PT requirements for admission. Classes listed above may differ slightly from what some PT schools require. Course substitution request should be made through and approved by the coordinator.

JMU has articulation agreements with some physical therapy programs (information at [http://www.iihhs.jmu.edu/academics/preptarticulation.html](http://www.iihhs.jmu.edu/academics/preptarticulation.html)).

ACADEMIC RECORD
Students will, as part of the application process, be asked to submit a transcript of all university course work. Overall grade point average (GPA), as well as the GPA in math and science courses, will often be used in the review of the application. Most physical therapy programs require a minimum GPA in order to make application. Please refer to individual program prerequisites for further details.

PREPARATION TIMELINE
Most applications for physical therapy programs will need to be completed during the early fall semester of the student's senior year. Students should have all of the prerequisites completed by the time of application. Both the chemistry and physics requirements involve yearlong sequences. Other required courses, such as psychology, have sequencing requirements. Students need to carefully plan each semester to ensure that all requirements can be met.
within the chosen time frame. Should you choose to pursue this preparation timeline, you will experience a very highly structured and challenging sequence of courses. Some students choose to increase their preparation timeline to allow for greater flexibility in scheduling.

REQUIRED STANDARDIZED TESTS
A vast majority of physical therapy programs require the completion of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) as part of the prerequisite package. Please refer to individual program requirements for additional standardized tests that may be required. Information about the GRE is available at www.gre.org.

EXPERIENCE
Students are encouraged to begin accumulating volunteer experience in a physical therapy setting as soon as possible. Some physical therapy programs require as much as 200 hours of experience. It is essential that students begin this process early in their college years.

EVALUATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS
All physical therapy programs require letters of recommendation/evaluation. Students should work on establishing relationships with professors in the university setting as well as work place settings. References from a professor and/or health care professional are typically preferred as opposed to personal or religious-based references.

JMU ADVISORY RESOURCES
The Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services and its staff of dedicated coordinators and advisors function to assist pre-professional students in their health career endeavors and help them realize their aspirations by providing the specific information, advice and assistance that is unique to the health professions and critical to their success. Dr. Jeff Konin is the Pre-physical Therapy Program coordinator.

PRE-PT SOCIETY
The JMU Pre-PT society is a student organization consisting of JMU students interested in PT as a career. This organization meets once a month, usually in the evenings. Activities include field trips to PT programs, guest speakers, and information sharing. A faculty member knowledgeable in the area of physical therapy serves as club advisor. Students interested in physical therapy are encouraged to become a member of the Pre-PT Society. The Pre-PT Society sponsors a yearly PT School Expo, and hosts an organizational web site on the blackboard. To join the Pre-PT Society, contact Dr. Jeff Konin at koninjg@jmu.edu.

The JMU Virginia Epsilon chapter of Alpha Epsilon Delta (Health Pre-professional Honor Society) also welcomes students to their meetings and encourages students to become members.

Note: Students planning professional health careers should discuss these goals with their pre-professional health program and undergraduate major advisors. It is important to begin this planning process when students’ studies are initiated; it is imperative that students plan career options. The admissions requirement information presented above should be used only as a guide when planning students’ pre-professional health curriculum. It is important that students do not interpret these guidelines as definitive statements regarding the admission requirements or policies of the individual schools and colleges of professional health. Each institution specifies its own requirements and procedures. It is essential that students become familiar with these requirements and make appropriate course selections in consultation with their pre-professional health and academic advisors. Absolute admission requirements are limited to provide necessary flexibility in the undergraduate program. The course requirements for most professional health programs are similar and usually specify minimum credit in biology, chemistry and physics. Schools of professional health recognize the desirability of students having a variety of interests and diverse backgrounds. Applicants are urged to obtain a broad cultural background in such fields as literature, social science, psychology and the fine arts.

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