



Using Research, Innovation and Collaboration to link Undergraduate and DPT Students

Bethany Frantsen, SPT, Molly Stark, SPT, Katelind Keating, SPT, Elisabeth Thom, SPT, Lyndsey Vandenberg PT, DPT, EdD

Purpose

Research demonstrates a lack of connectedness between undergraduate (UG) and graduate students at universities around the U.S. This stems from:

- ❑ A lack of awareness of available resources and programs
- ❑ A lack of mentorship
- ❑ Insufficient face-to-face interaction
- ❑ COVID-19 Pandemic.¹

UG students have reported receiving little information surrounding their prospective fields of study,² including the field of physical therapy (PT). Establishing continued relationships among faculty and students aids in retention rates,³ and graduate mentorship programs reduce feelings of isolation.⁴ The purpose of this work was to develop systems to increase connectedness for UG students in alignment with the PT Moves Me Campaign established by APTA.⁶

Description

A needs assessment was conducted in 2021 with UG and DPT students. Results aligned with our research and prompted further action. A PT Club and Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) were established in 2022 in an attempt to promote the profession and bridge the gaps in connectedness between the undergraduate and DPT students at CSP.

The PT Club is innovative in that it intentionally links UG and DPT students. Many institutions have a Pre-PT club, catering only to UG students. Through the initiation of the PT Club, prospective UG students receive structure, guidance, and direction from current CSP DPT students and faculty.

The PMP pairs UG students with a current DPT student, which helps develop personal relationships. UG students are also able to observe DPT student research, integrated clinical experiences, or lectures/labs. Peer mentoring guides have been created based on UG student needs as they matriculate through UG studies.

Observation

The CSP PT Club has hosted multiple meetings and attended various club marketing events on campus, catering to UG and DPT students alike. Students were able to vote on topics they would like to explore further and this includes review of the DPT application process, observation hours and clinical experiences, various specialties, and practice settings. There are several students actively involved in the program.

Through the PMP, undergraduate students became involved in various DPT class lectures and labs, participated in DPT research, and collaborated with their DPT peer mentors to establish confidence and preparedness to take the next steps in their academic career.

Conclusion

The PT Club and PMP were established in response to a needs assessment that was previously conducted. Both have been successful in connecting UG students to the DPT program, which aligns with research and the PT Moves Me campaign by APTA.⁶ Succession of the PT Club and mentorship roles will be established each Spring to ensure sustainability of systems established.



PTMovesMe

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Implications

Implementing PMP and and PT Club at universities with both UG and graduate PT programs will be beneficial to students in both programs, allowing for the sharing of valuable information and guidance that isn't always accessible to students. This will also help expand the reach of institutions by increasing engagement of PT students and prospective students alike.

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