

New University of Saint Mary Doctor of Physical Therapy Program Earns Important Candidacy Status

Decision Allows USM's First Doctorate Program to Proceed with Classes

(Leavenworth, Kan.)—The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program at the University of Saint Mary hit two major milestones this week that signal the final green lights for the university to start the program with its first class of students on June 4. On Wednesday, May 2, the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) of the American Physical Therapy Association, the accrediting body for physical therapy education programs, granted candidacy status for the USM DPT program.

USM also received a letter this week confirming approval by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to offer a Doctorate in Physical Therapy.

With candidacy status secured, the university can now move forward with its very first doctoral program, accept students, and begin classes next month.

“This is a big moment for our program and the university,” said Mark Horacek, PT, MS, Ph.D., director of USM’s DPT program. “You cannot begin your program without candidacy, and our faculty and staff have been working very hard in this effort.

“The bar is set high, but in doing so, CAPTE ensures that you have done everything you can to give your students a great education.”

The next step in accreditation for USM’s DPT will require three more years of effort. Over the next three years, as the university’s first cohort of physical therapy students completes their education, USM will undertake a self-study culminating in an accreditation visit in 2015. The visit will coincide with the last semester of the first cohort’s final year at USM. If the university meets CAPTE’s expectations, the program would then be granted accreditation prior to the graduation of the first DPT class.

USM has approval to accept as many as 40 DPT students per class, and is hopeful to be at capacity when classes get underway.

University President Sister Diane Steele hailed CAPTE’s decision as the latest development in a historical moment in USM history.

“The Doctor of Physical Therapy is the cornerstone in our strategic plan to help answer the nation’s growing need for highly trained health care professionals,” President Steele said. “The DPT complements our many other health care education offerings, including our well-regarded nursing program, the new accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing track, and our new Health Information Management program. The development of the DPT will also benefit the local community as its students will be living in Leavenworth.”

Dr. Bryan Le Beau, USM's academic vice president, said the university was "very pleased to have received word from CAPTE and the HLC regarding our DPT program. Few people realize how demanding these accreditors are, as they should be, in demanding the highest possible quality for doctoral programs.

"That we were successful is testimonial to both the quality of the education USM provides its students and the hard work and high degree of professionalism Dr. Mark Horacek, showed in preparing the way. We are confident that the DPT will be another shining example of the quality of our health care programs at USM."

Dr. Le Beau added that the creation of the DPT would lay the foundations for the university to create future doctorate programs.

Learn more about the USM DPT program at www.stmary.edu/dpt or call 913-758-4398.

**The Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at the University of Saint Mary has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education of the American Physical Therapy Association (1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA, 22314; phone: 703-706-3245; email: accreditation@apta.org). Candidacy is not an accreditation status nor does it assure eventual accreditation. Candidate for Accreditation is a pre-accreditation status of affiliation with the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education that indicates the program is progressing toward accreditation.*

The University of Saint Mary is a Catholic co-educational applied liberal arts university founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The University of Saint Mary is located at 4100 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, Kan., with additional locations in Overland Park and Kansas City, Kan. Visit www.stmary.edu for more information.