

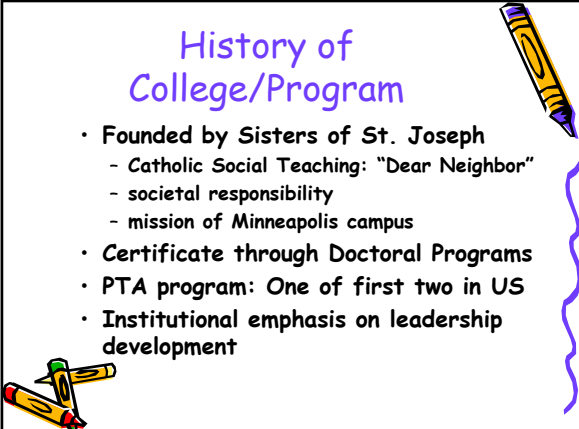
**Promoting PTAs as Leaders  
Within and Beyond the  
Classroom**

Holly Clynch PT, MA, GCS  
Jessica Solberg, PTA  
College of St. Catherine  
Minneapolis, Minnesota



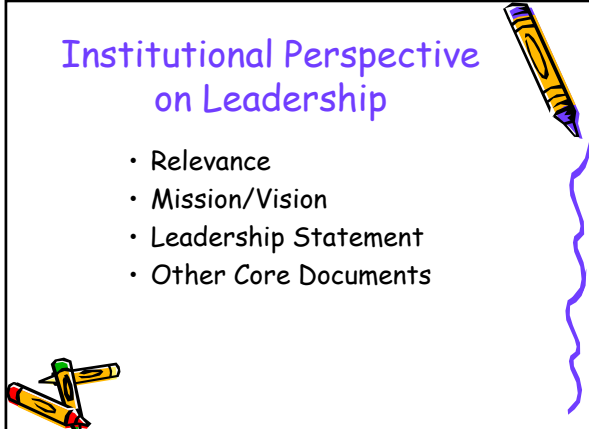
### Overview

- Goals of session
- Acknowledgements
- Background
- Foundational elements
- Research results
- Curriculum changes
- Ongoing development/recognition
- Conclusion/questions



### History of College/Program

- **Founded by Sisters of St. Joseph**
  - Catholic Social Teaching: "Dear Neighbor"
  - societal responsibility
  - mission of Minneapolis campus
- **Certificate through Doctoral Programs**
- **PTA program: One of first two in US**
- **Institutional emphasis on leadership development**



### Institutional Perspective on Leadership

- Relevance
- Mission/Vision
- Leadership Statement
- Other Core Documents

## Program Perspective on Leadership

- Role of the PTA
  - PT/PTA
  - society
- DPT/PTA student interaction
- Nature of "typical" PTA student



## Influencing Factors

- Changes in the health care environment
- Student clinical challenges
  - expectations
- Vision 2020
  - Changing role for PTAs?
- RC40 Task Force
  - PTAs looking for recognition of post-entry level PTA skills



## Review of Current Evidence - Health Care Leadership Trends

- Shared responsibilities at all levels
- Communication skills
- Ability to handle stress/chaos
- Recognize consistency as well as change
- Self-discipline
- Constant desire to grow/learn



## Leadership is NOT..

- Being "in charge"
- Having all the answers
- Making all the decisions
- Working in isolation
- Operating beyond one's scope of work
- Making others feel "led"



### Our Research

- Surveyed 210 Clinical Instructors from CSC
- Four part survey
  - expected frequency of 25 behaviors
  - most important behaviors
  - changes in CI performance expectations
  - demographic information



### Behaviors: Most Frequent (expected to be demonstrated by student > 75% of time)

- Managing patient Rx time independently
- Completing documentation on time
- Finding things to do independently
- Teaching others effectively
- Recognizing changes in status
- Prioritizing work responsibilities



### Behaviors: Most Important

- Recognizing changes in status
- Appearing confident
- Managing patient Rx time independently
- Independently deciding how to progress/modify patient interventions within existing plan of care
- Responding to change without demonstrating stress



### Additional Important Behaviors (written in by CIs)

- Strong communication skills
- Interest in learning
- Positive personality
- Competent/knowledgeable
- Responsible
- Punctual/Consistent in attendance



## Expectations for Behaviors

- 28%: expectations increased in past 5 years
  - productivity demands
  - increased/earlier PTA utilization
- 23%: students not being adequately prepared to meet CI expectations



## Analysis of Results

- Behaviors consistent with those expected of entry-level PTs
- Behaviors expected were consistent with those expected of leaders
  - communication
  - time management
  - independence
  - self-management
    - initiative, responsibility, reliability
  - image presented to others
    - confident, calm, positive



## Our conclusions:

- Demonstration of leadership traits expected as part of entry-level performance
- Our curriculum was not adequately preparing all students to meet these expectations.





## New Curricular Paradigm

- Behaviors labeled as leadership traits
- Emphasis on independent decision-making within scope of work
- Assume presence of stress/time factors
- Empowerment/ownership of behavior





## Small Group Discussion

- What documents or activities do you already have in place that might help you develop leadership traits?

## Curricular Recommendations

- Develop leadership philosophy
  - Use existing materials
- Teach leadership immediately in program
- Hold students accountable for behaviors
- Test leadership behaviors
  - Atypical patients
  - multiple tasks/choices of options
  - realistic time frames
- Inform clinicians of leadership expectations

**Leadership Profile**  
for the College of St. Catherine  
Entry Level Physical Therapist Assistant

The College of St. Catherine (CSC) entry level physical therapist assistant, in addition to demonstrating professional competence in skill performance, is expected to demonstrate behavioral competencies within the clinical setting. In collaboration with CSC Clinical Instructors (CIs), this profile has been developed to assist in standardizing the types and frequencies of behaviors that the CSC entry level PTA should demonstrate.



This profile identifies behaviors that a majority of CSC clinical instructors believe are most important and should be demonstrated by an entry level PTA. It can be used as a guideline for what behaviors the student should be demonstrating consistently by the end of the final clinical experience. This tool is a guideline; it should NOT be considered an absolute standard for required performance or an all-inclusive list.

Expectations for performance may be defined differently by different CIs, in different settings. It is expected, however, that this profile will be used by each instructor and at all sites of the clinical as a mechanism for initiating discussion about the individual site's and the student's expectations.

**The CSC Entry Level PTA is expected to consistently:**



- recognize and respond appropriately to changes in the patient/client's status
- manage time independently throughout the course of the day especially during patient/client intervention sessions
- appear confident and calm (even if not feeling it inside)
- communicate with others in a pleasant, positive manner
- manage change by demonstrating flexibility instead of stress
- prioritize responsibilities and complete tasks without reminders
- identify and initiate additional projects when assigned tasks are completed
- complete documentation on time
- teach effectively and learn enthusiastically
- make sound decisions regarding modification or progression of interventions within the patient/client's established plan of care
- demonstrate punctuality, reliability, and self-management

As a member of a health care team that is jointly responsible for the well being of others, the entry level PTA is expected to demonstrate individual leadership abilities such as those listed above. He/she should also enthusiastically and willingly participate in any other designated leadership duties within the physical therapy department.

## Classroom/clinical opportunities for PTA student leadership:

- Patient/client interaction
- SPTA/SPT interaction
  - tutorials
- With external partners
  - SSIG in APTA chapter
  - Service learning opportunities

### Post-Graduation Leadership Development

- How do we encourage our students to continue this work after graduation?
- How do we empower PTAs who did not receive "leadership training" to recognize & utilize their leadership skills?



### PTA Leadership Development Seminar

- Goals of the seminar
- The process of putting it together
- Observations
- Participant comments



### MN-APTA Opportunities

- Legislative Day
- CE for PTAs
- PTA SIG meetings
- PTA position on MN Chapter BOD and MN BPT
- Soundwaves articles



### Small Group Discussion

- What is one curricular or CE activity that you could add to your current PTA leadership development activities?



## Vision 2020 and the PTA

- Tenets of Vision 2020
  - Direct Access
  - DPT
  - Professionalism
  - Evidence-based Practice
  - Autonomous Practice
  - Practitioner of Choice
- PTAs often don't see where they fit in.



## Small Group Discussion

- How are the tenets of Vision 2020 supported by PTAs in the clinic?



## Conclusion

- Philosophies/expectations for performance may already exist
  - Utilize existing documents
- Make philosophy/expectations more explicit
- Empower your PTAs pre- and post-graduation!

