

Task Force on Physical Therapist Preferred Prerequisites and Centralized Application Service

A Report to AASIG

Agenda

- Overview of Task Force charge
- Centralized application services
- Preferred prerequisites

Charge – March 2006 BOD

- To explore and investigate the potential barriers and opportunities associated with application to physical therapist education programs, including but not limited to the following issues, with a report to the March 2007 Board of Directors meeting:
 - The development of a set of preferred prerequisites for admission into physical therapist education programs.
 - The development of a common application process.

Consideration should be given to including representation on the Task Force from the Education Section, Academic Administrator's Special Interest Group (AASIG), and other professions.

Charge (cont.)

SS: The investigation into prerequisite requirements of physical therapist education programs by the Education Section resulted in the adoption of the document "Admissions Requirements Recommendations" by the section, followed by the publication of an article by David Lake, PT, PhD in *The Advisor*, titled "Admissions Requirements for Physical Therapy Programs" in September 2005. These were positive first steps toward identifying the extent of commonalities of prerequisites among physical therapist programs. Further effort is required to identify barriers to application to physical therapist education programs from the student's perspective, since there exists sufficient variation among programs that can result in increased time and money for the student to meet the requirements of multiple specific institutions. Additional data will most likely be required in order to determine the burden on the student related to the variation in prerequisites, as well as the burden on educational programs related to changing prerequisites. Investigation of the benefits and liabilities associated with a common application process should also be considered by the Task Force as it is a related issue. Given the effort currently being expended to identify mechanisms to increase the applicant pool, it seems prudent to develop and promote a set of preferred prerequisites to further reduce the barriers and burden associated with the application process.

Education Strategic Plan

Goal 9: Develop and implement a plan to recruit qualified, diverse applicants to physical therapist and physical therapist assistant programs.

Objectives

- Perform an analysis of the profession to identify barriers to diversity and cultural competence.
- Implement identified strategies from the Association Task Force generating the response to RC 28-05 Promoting Physical Therapy as the Profession of Choice to High School and College Students Across the United States.
- Identify the personal characteristics in candidates we perceive as essential to becoming autonomous practitioners and include screening methods in the recruitment process to identify these characteristics.
- Investigate the development of a set of preferred prerequisites for admission into professional physical therapist education programs.
- Collaborate with academia to identify future workforce needs for PTs and PTAs, and strategies to effectively meet those needs.
- Explore the creation of a common application, notification, and acceptance process for physical therapy education program admission.

Strategies

- Investigate application processes in other doctoring health professions and their risks and benefits.

Centralized Application Services

- A service enabling the completion of a single application for admission to multiple institutions, a mechanism to collect and verify transcripts, standardize GPAs, and collect and ensure the authenticity of references

Centralized Application Services

- Currently used by:
 - Osteopathic medicine (95%)
 - Medicine (100%)
 - Podiatric medicine (86%)
 - Dentistry (95%)
 - Physician Assistant (73%) (2001)
 - Pharmacy (48%) (2002)
 - Veterinary medicine (83%)
 - Texas state schools (100%)
 - Law schools (100%)
 - Public health (60%) (July 2006)

Features of a CAS

- Common application form
- Verification of transcripts and/or degree
- Standardized GPA
- On-line submission/collection of references

Features of a CAS

- Real-time access to application status
- Creation of a national admissions database
- Portals for programs, advisors, students

Initial Responses/Impressions

- A CAS process will take away control from programs regarding admissions decisions; One purpose of a CAS is to collect information, but it makes no decisions
- A CAS will slow down or lengthen the admissions process; A CAS enables programs to have immediate access to applicant information so can expedite the process
- Physical therapy programs are too complicated and different for a CAS to work; Although a CAS will not simplify the programs, it can facilitate the application process and enable valuable resources to be directed toward other initiatives like marketing and recruitment
- Students will not want to pay a fee to use a CAS; Students in other disciplines have responded very favorably to CAS options because it is easier than traditional application processes and because only one set of transcripts and references is required, it may save them money
- Programs have unique information they want to collect that won't be included in a CAS; Programs can require a supplemental application to collect additional information

Benefits for Programs

- CAS can simplify application and admissions processes and reduce administrative work
- Enables staff time to be used for other initiatives (e.g. marketing, recruitment)
- Exposure and opportunity to recruit additional students – net increase in applicant pool size
- Enables programs to make better decisions due to greater understanding of applicant pool (access to electronic data about applicants)

Benefits for Programs

- Potential to link to uniform outcomes assessment process that is in the process of being developed
- Provides immediate access to applicant information to expedite process
- May experience overall cost savings
- Participation is voluntary
- Programs can require a supplemental application to collect additional information and fees

Benefits for Students

- Students may perceive fewer barriers to applying to PT – improves access to PT programs
- A CAS is a valuable service for which applicants will be willing to pay
- Decrease in time and costs related to the application process (complete one application, pay for one set of transcripts)
- Ability to track status of application and admissions processes

Benefits for Students

- A fee waiver program can be established to assist applicants for whom the fees are a barrier or hardship
- Advisors will know more about physical therapy and be able to provide better guidance to students

Benefits for Profession

- Development of a CAS is consistent with a doctoring profession
- Timing is excellent given the increase in health professions' applications and the current workforce environment
- The benefits and application of data collected from a CAS will extend beyond education to workforce issues, advocacy, research, practice, etc.
- A CAS will contribute to providing a consistent, professional brand for physical therapy

Benefits for Profession

- Enables assessment of the applicant pool and development of targeted recruitment and retention efforts
- May provide non dues revenue that can be directed toward marketing and recruitment
- The unique identifier assigned to each applicant can be used to track members of the profession throughout their career

Challenges

- Communication to constituencies to discuss the value of a CAS and to develop buy-in
- May be issues related to computer literacy in terms of access to a CAS and to the profession
- Potential lost revenue and staff in individual programs
- CAS may be more expensive for students

Challenges

- A CAS may create a more volatile applicant pool/process because students may apply to more programs which may complicate admissions processes
- Integrating electronic data with program individual student management software
- Initially there may be a perception of inequality between those programs who choose to join the CAS and those who don't

Other Issues

- National Association of Advisors of Health Professions (NAAHP) very supportive
- We will benefit from the experience of the other disciplines who have CASs

Plan

- Collect data from programs and students in October
- TF analyze data
- Continue to explore issues and concerns associated with CAS
- Report to March 2007 BOD
- Determine how to proceed

Preferred Prerequisites

- TF reviewed data collected by Education Section effort led by David Lake, PT, PhD
- Discussed challenges to programs adopting a common set of prerequisites
 - Not all programs admit students with a bachelors degree
 - Little data exist correlating prerequisites with performance during or following PT school
 - Other health professions who have more standard prerequisites also have more standard program designs and curricula than PT

TF Recommendations

- Report to APTA BOD that the work of the Education Section with respect to prerequisites is adequate until and if a CAS is developed that will generate data that will enable further exploration of the issue (September 26, 2006)
- Recreate the prerequisite table for students and academic advisors based on CAPTE's Directory of Programs with footnotes to indicate when specific courses are required.
- Disseminate table to programs to verify information prior to publication
- Using existing data, investigate whether applicants are negatively influenced by the variation in program prerequisites

Questions?

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