The UNM Division of Physical Therapy (PT) is going strong as it approaches its 40th year anniversary in 2014. In the course of the 40 years more than 700 students have received entry level degrees in PT from the program and successfully passed the national PT licensure examination. Over 75% of our graduates practice in New Mexico. Since 1974 the program has transitioned from offering a 2-year Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy degree, to a 2.5-year Master of Physical Therapy degree in 2000, to the 3-year Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree in 2009.

Many of the PT faculty have received UNM’s School of Medicine Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Leadership awards in the category of Diagnostic and Therapeutic Sciences programs. As of 2013, 5 of the 8 faculty members with PhDs had been promoted with tenure to associate professor or professor, and 2 faculty on the clinical track were promoted to associate professor.

Faculty have grown more involved with important research studies ranging from basic science to clinical projects, including receipt of both intra- and extra-mural grant funding. Over the years several studies have been presented at national and international professional conferences and many articles have been published from this research.

An exciting development from 2010- 2012 was expansion of the program’s motion analysis equipment to include an updated 8-camera system with force-plates as well as a Gait Rite mat system. This equipment was installed in a permanent location on the first floor of the Health Sciences and Services Building in 2012. The state of the art lab was named The Fred Rutan Center for Gait and Motion Analysis in honor of a previous Program Director. The new laboratory provides numerous opportunities for inter-professional clinical and research activities for the PT faculty. Collaborations have begun with the Departments of Orthopaedics and Neurology and Carrie Tingley Hospital, with others on the horizon.

The curricular emphasis is on the 4 primary treatment areas in physical therapy practice: musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, cardiovascular/pulmonary, and integumentary. With the inception of the DPT curriculum in 2009, content was expanded in the areas of Gender Health, Differential Diagnosis for Physical Therapists, Evidence Based Practice, Imaging, Pharmacology, and psychosocial/cultural aspects of patient care. Students now engage in 36 weeks of clinical experiences in acute care, orthopaedics, neurology/pediatrics, and 1 elective setting, at 4 of approximately 200 clinical sites. Concluding their didactic and clinical content, students develop and present a capstone project based on a clinical case study and appropriate evidence in the literature. Abstracts from some of the capstone projects of the Class of 2013 follow this report.

The Division of Physical Therapy has been an integral educational program within the School of Medicine for close to 40 years. We are proud the many accomplishments of our graduates, students, faculty and staff who continue to fulfill the mission of our Division and the UNM School of Medicine to meet the health care needs of New Mexicans.