

# Letter from the Chief of the Division of Physical Therapy

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The University of New Mexico (UNM) Division of Physical Therapy continues to be a steadfast group of almost 100 students within the School of Medicine and larger Health Sciences Center. We continue to be the only physical therapy program in New Mexico, proudly graduating 26 new doctors of physical

therapy (DPT) in May 2018. I am honored to assume the leadership of this remarkable group of faculty, staff, and students.

My leadership journey began in August 2018 with a facilitated strategic planning meeting. The ideas, experiences, and dedication of more than 25 stakeholders, as well as another 30 who completed surveys, led to a new plan for the division. I am happy to share our new vision, mission, and goals.

Our **vision** is to prepare physical therapists as movement specialists and leaders to fulfill essential roles within interprofessional collaborative teams serving the diverse communities of New Mexico.

Our **mission** is to develop highly skilled and compassionate doctors of physical therapy who optimize the human experience of New Mexico communities by enhancing movement and function through evidence-based practice.

Our three **goals** are as follows: 1) using an efficient and effective approach, the student and faculty experience will be optimized to produce highly skilled, compassionate DPTs, 2) our community ties will be built and strengthened through the provision of quality professional development and research, and 3) the diversity of the DPT students will mirror the diversity of New Mexico.

Owing to the many objectives within each goal, we are busy working to fulfill this strategic plan. The new initiatives include the following:

**A new Student Success Committee comprised of two elected students from each cohort.** Recognizing the need for transparency and team building, the faculty began this committee of students, faculty, and administration that meets at least twice a month to review and measure the pulse of the hidden curriculum within the classroom and school. From this committee,

we began a new cooperative evaluation process that examines improvement and success throughout the program.

**A new Mentorship Program with community-based physical therapists.** Recognizing a need to increase national and state-wide involvement within the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), a committee of students, faculty, administration, and members of the New Mexico APTA (NMAPTA) gathered to begin this inaugural mentoring program. We matched clinicians from the NMAPTA with students in our second-year cohort, fostering the relationships through events each quarter. We look forward to continuing this program with future second-year cohorts at the Induction Ceremony every fall.

**Re-organization of our Research Committee.** Identifying the need to build our team of researchers, the Research Committee has been re-structured to foster more collaboration among faculty, students, and our partners throughout the campus. Our research agenda is robust, with multiple publications and presentations this past year, and the future outlook is bright.

**Improving undergraduate outreach.** To continue reaching our diverse population of undergraduates and helping them matriculate to our program, we have increased our presence on main campus. The initiatives that have grown from this effort include an increased presence at the UNM Health Professions Symposium in March 2019 (included five educational programs led by faculty and students) and improving awareness of student resources to prepare for the Graduate Record Examination.

The faculty and staff of the division are working hard on multiple fronts to improve the student experience, increase our research agenda, and build strong ties to our profession and the community. We are excited to oversee this strategic plan and build on an already historically excellent program.

Respectfully,

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