



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: Jeff Jessee, Dean of the College of Health and Vice Provost of Health Programs

Cc: Leah Wilsey, Committee Chair & Term Assistant Professor of Physical Therapist Assistant  
Terese Swayman, Term Assistant Professor of Physical Therapist Assistant  
LeeAnne Carrothers, Director, School of Allied Health

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

**Program/s in this review:** Physical Therapist Assistant AAS

**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** The Physical Therapist Assistant AAS is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE).

**Campuses where the program is delivered:** Anchorage

**Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role:**

The Physical Therapist Assistant AAS prepares students to be knowledgeable, competent, and caring individuals as entry-level Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs). PTAs work in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, home and public health agencies, schools, private clinics and in the armed forces. They help people of all ages who have movement difficulties due to injury or disease get back to doing the things in their lives that they want and need to do. Graduates of the AAS in Physical Therapist Assistant are eligible to sit for the National Physical Therapy Exam administered by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy. Employment growth for physical therapist assistants is expected to be robust (+23.8%), with a low average number of annual openings (+13). The program accepts 12 students per cohort, so it appears to be sized correctly to meet industry needs. The Physical Therapist Assistant AAS is central to the College of Health mission to advance the health and wellbeing of people and communities. The program also maintains strong partnerships with the healthcare community in Alaska.

**Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity:**

The program has regularly accepted full cohorts of 12 students. Retention of students is very high, with 11 students graduating in 2016, and 12 students graduating each year since. Since the program began in 2016, a total of 47 students have earned the Physical Therapist Assistant AAS. Instructional costs are high. On average, full tuition revenues only cover 46% of the instructional costs. The eventual loss of TVEP funding to support instructional costs will further decrease the program's return on investment. It is unfortunate that the program did not contextualize these costs in its program review. It is not clear why the return on investment is low or how it could be improved. Partnering with industry partners and the Alaska Physical Therapy Association to offer continuing education courses could potentially increase revenues.

**Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success:**

The program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). Accreditation is required for program graduates to sit for the national licensure examination. The program has not been very successful in assessing program student learning outcomes. The program will need to allocate more effort to academic assessment and program improvement. A more systematic approach is needed to identify, implement, and assess recommendations for program improvement. Nonetheless, it is clear that students are successful in completing the program, passing the national licensure examination, and obtaining employment. Outcome data show that 98% of students completed the program, 98% passed the national licensure examination, and 100% of those who passed the national licensure examination were employed.

**Program Duplication / Distinctiveness:**

There are no other Physical Therapist Assistant educational programs in the state of Alaska.

**Commendations and Recommendations:**

The Physical Therapist Assistant AAS successfully prepares physical therapist assistants for employment in Alaska. Today, almost a quarter of the PTA licentiates in Alaska graduated from UAA's PTA AAS program. UAA's program is the only PTA program in the state of Alaska. Employment growth is projected to be robust, and the program effectively meets industry needs. The program could be enhanced to provide training to students in rural areas and to students who completed their PTA training in the military. To meet industry demands outside of Anchorage, some of the courses could be delivered online. Students who completed their PTA training in the military need additional education from a CAPTE-accredited program to sit for the national licensing exam. The program could offer this opportunity for additional education. These options should be considered during the normal program review cycle. In addition, the program must implement a more robust academic assessment process to identify key recommendations for program improvement.

**Decision:**

Continuation.