

Doctor of Physical Therapy



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By the numbers

Ranked #1

PT program by *U.S. News & World Report*

38 weeks

of full-time clinical experience

400+

clinical training sites nationwide

99%

average passage rate on the professional
licensure exam on the first attempt

\$600,000+

awarded in scholarships annually

Continuously accredited

since 1942





The Doctor of Physical Therapy program at WashU Medicine

prepares graduates to be outstanding diagnosticians and therapists, ready to excel in their professional goals.

- Learn from leaders in the field
- Engage in a supportive, enthusiastic and collegial environment
- Develop expertise using the Human Movement System as a foundation



Why WashU Medicine

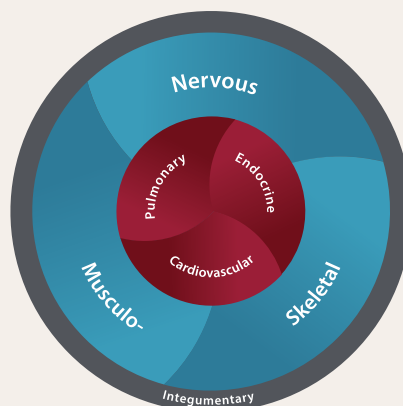
Program in Physical Therapy

Our faculty, students and staff are proud of our program and passionate about the field. Our program pioneered and continues to advance an approach to physical therapy that focuses on the science of movement — more specifically, how improper movement leads to physical injury, impairment and problems with function.

Under this model, our students learn not only to manage symptoms, but to identify and correct their underlying causes. Our curriculum is built around the human movement system — the set of organ systems that interact to produce and support movement of the body. The primary drivers of movement are the nervous and musculoskeletal systems, with the pulmonary, endocrine, cardiovascular and integumentary systems in supportive roles.

Our approach produces highly sought-after graduates who go on to successful and rewarding careers.

THE HUMAN MOVEMENT SYSTEM



The human movement system is the core of the program's mission, integrating physiological organ systems that interact to produce and support movement of the body.



"The human movement system is the foundation of our profession. Physical therapists are movement system experts. The human movement system sits at the core of our three-pronged mission to provide exceptional education, conduct groundbreaking research and deliver outstanding patient care."

— **GAMMON EARHART, PT, PHD, FAPTA**
Associate Dean for Physical Therapy
Director, Program in Physical Therapy



Program overview

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Program at WashU Medicine is a professional, full-time clinical doctorate course of study that prepares students for the practice of physical therapy.

Our learning environment

The Program in Physical Therapy creates a learning environment for the DPT curriculum that promotes the health and equity of students, employees and members of our community. Our students are surrounded by professionals engaged across the triple aim of education, research and clinical practice. Students work collaboratively with expert clinicians immersed in the contemporary clinical environment, top researchers who incorporate new discovery in the classroom, and master educators who integrate new knowledge through the best practices in the learning sciences. Our environment is warm, non-competitive and collegial. We take a learner-centered approach to education that provides active, flexible and individualized learning opportunities supported through coaching and mentoring; our assessment philosophy is focused on growth and improvement.

Authentic situated learning experiences

The two-year, eight-month program engages students in authentic situated learning experiences that involve patients in the academic and clinical settings. In the classroom, students interact with each other, faculty and clinical subjects to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities of the movement-system practitioner. Classes also feature case studies and training at off-site clinical locations. Students encounter increasingly difficult cases as they move through the curriculum. Part-time integrated clinical experiences and full-time clinical education begin early and are distributed throughout the curriculum to provide real-world experience and deeper experiential learning.

Interprofessional engagement

Students benefit from formal and informal experiences in interprofessional education. They work with and learn from other faculty and students including those from occupational therapy, medicine, pharmacy, audiology and nursing. Program in Physical Therapy graduates embrace their professional identity as leaders in their community, dedicated to advancing human health by preventing, diagnosing and managing movement problems across the lifespan.



"WashU Medicine PT faculty are exceptional and second to none, blending cutting-edge teaching with genuine care. They build personal relationships with learners, ensuring students thrive in their chosen paths. Their dedication to mentorship and up-to-date content prepares us not just for successful careers in PT but for success in all aspects of life."

— MATT WINDHAM, DPT '26, Corinth, Mississippi

Coaching and the master adaptive learner

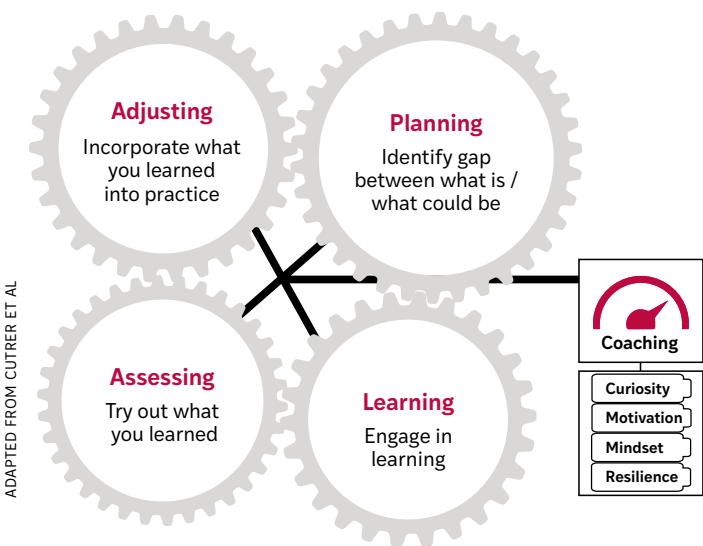
Each DPT learner is paired with a faculty coach for the duration of their academic experience. Through individual and group meetings that focus on the learner’s growth and improvement, the coach facilitates the master adaptive learner Cycle. This framework for learning is represented by gears in a figure, with four phases: planning, learning, assessing and adjusting. Curiosity, motivation, mindset and resilience are like fuel for the learner during these phases. With this approach, coaching acts as a tool to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Master Adaptive Learner process.

Importantly, coaching is different from advising or mentoring. The coach’s main role is to empower the learner to take action, rather than telling them what to do. The coach listens more than they speak and does not give a lot of direct advice. Instead, they ask open-ended questions that make the learner think and

grow as a master adaptive learner. In this coaching relationship, the learner is the expert because they know their goals better than anyone else. The coach is there to provide support, hold the learner accountable and connect them with resources if needed.

The coaching relationship between a learner and a coach changes over the three years the learner is in school. At first, the coaching sessions happen more often and are scheduled by the coach. The coach takes the lead in guiding the conversation. As the learner progresses through their studies, the coaching meetings become less frequent, and the learner starts deciding what to talk about during these meetings. Eventually, the learner takes charge of scheduling the meetings and determining how often they should happen. This change is intentional and prepares the learner for life after graduation.

Master adaptive learner cycle



The DPT curriculum focuses on the development of the master adaptive learner while also promoting progression to or beyond competence. Over time, students develop the ability to plan, learn, assess, adjust, critically think and reflect with the independence necessary for exemplary entry-level practice.

DOMAINS OF COMPETENCE

Our domains of competence are the broad, distinguishable areas of competence that together constitute the general descriptive framework for the profession and our program. The learner will progress toward competence in each of these areas as they move through the curriculum.

Patient and client care

Provide informed, compassionate, effective and efficient person-centered care for the management of movement problems and the promotion of health and wellness

Knowledge for practice

Integrate knowledge from established and evolving movement and other relevant biomedical, clinical, epidemiological and social-behavioral sciences to guide practice

Practice-based learning and improvement

Evaluate one's delivery of care, appraise and assimilate scientific evidence, and continuously improve performance based on self-evaluation

Interpersonal and communication skills

Use effective interpersonal and communication skills to interact and collaborate with others

Professionalism

Adhere to ethical and legal principles, model professional behaviors and demonstrate a commitment to citizenship within the profession and the community

Systems-based practice

Function effectively and proactively within evolving systems and environments that affect the health of individuals and populations

Interprofessional collaboration

Engage within interprofessional teams as an effective member and collaborative leader

Personal and professional development

Demonstrate the attributes required to engage in lifelong personal and professional growth

The DPT curriculum

	JULY	AUGUST		SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
YEAR ONE		PHASE 1: Learning as a professional		PHASE 2: Promoting health through movement			
		Learning, health and equity	Professions and movement	Movement and population health	Movement and precision health		
	Domains of competence I (Domains 1-8)						
YEAR TWO		PHASE 3: Optimizing movement					
		Prevention, diagnosis and management of movement problems					
	Domains of competence II (Domains 1-8)						
YEAR THREE		PHASE 4: Practicing as a professional					
		Clinical education 3		Clinical education 4			
	Domains of competence III (Domains 1-8)						



Active learning

Engaging in content with faculty, patients and peers within an active learning environment



Situational learning

Learning that occurs in the authentic clinical environment, including Clinical Education (CE) and Integrated Clinical Experience (ICE)



Clinician/scholar/educator

Choosing how to engage with competencies organized across current professional and societal issues related to health and human movement



Unscheduled

Break time or time for individualized learning opportunities

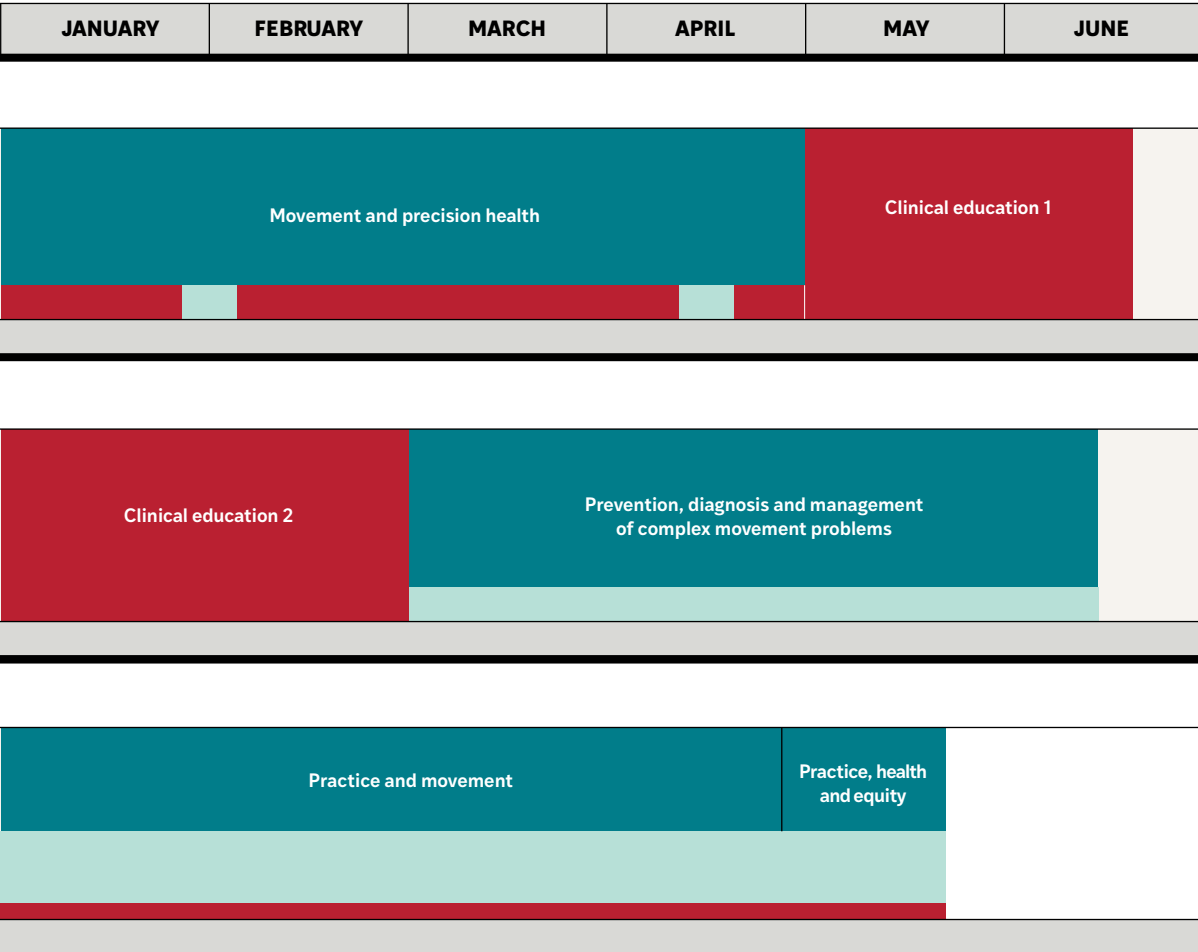


Domains of competence

Progressing in competency development

- Domain 1: Patient and client care
- Domain 2: Knowledge for practice
- Domain 3: Practice-based learning and improvement
- Domain 4: Interpersonal and communication skills
- Domain 5: Professionalism
- Domain 6: Systems-based practice
- Domain 7: Interprofessional collaboration
- Domain 8: Personal and professional development

Throughout the curriculum the learner progresses through four phases of development. Each phase includes all domains of competence and the complete cycle of the master adaptive learner.



PHASE 1: Learning as a professional

- Learning, health and equity
- Master adaptive learner
- Professions and professionalism
- The movement system practitioner

PHASE 2: Promoting health through movement

- Movement science
- Social and environmental systems
- Movement system practitioner and population health
- Movement system practitioner and precision health

PHASE 3: Optimizing movement

- Prevention, diagnosis and management of movement problems
- Prevention, diagnosis and management of complex movement problems

PHASE 4: Practicing as a professional

- Practice, health and equity
- Master adaptive learner
- Professions and professionalism
- Focused movement system practice

Clinical education

Clinical education is integrated throughout the curriculum. Students learn and apply key concepts, techniques and critical thinking skills. An emphasis on evidence-informed health care prepares students for excellence in clinical practice.

Clinical training includes:

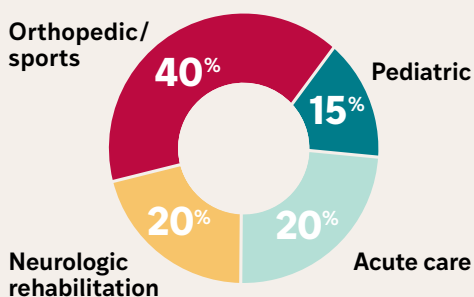
- Classroom learning throughout the program with fellow students and clients
- Integrated clinical experience in an area clinic (year one)
- Four full-time clinical experiences, each 8-12 weeks in length (38 weeks total) in a variety of practice settings

Students complete clinical experiences in a variety of settings such as hospitals, outpatient clinics, skilled nursing facilities, rehabilitation centers and school systems.

Students complete clinical experiences in both the inpatient and outpatient settings; the two additional clinical experiences are completed in settings of their choosing.

Students select sites in partnership with their faculty advisors, who also provide guidance during the clinical experiences. Sites are available in a range of settings, including urban, suburban and rural areas, and they may include international experiences.

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE PRACTICE SPECIALTIES



Choose from 400+ sites in 43 states, District of Columbia and international cities.

"Today I'm working my dream job as a pediatric physical therapist in Chicago, and I credit WashU Medicine PT for helping me get here. The faculty truly felt like family to me. They always went above and beyond to support me, not just academically but personally as well. There is no doubt in my mind that WashU Medicine was the right place to begin my PT journey."



— LEO JACOBS, DPT '25, Danville, Alabama





Faculty

Our faculty members are fully committed to excellence in teaching and possess the breadth and depth of knowledge to deliver a strong curriculum.

The program is designed to provide individual guidance and attention. All faculty maintain an open-door policy, leaving them fully accessible to provide advice, instruction and one-to-one mentoring.

Many faculty hold leadership positions in the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and its academies, and across the continuum of professional education including DPT education, clinical specialization and residency and fellowship training. They are invited to present their research at regional, national and international professional conferences.

Most treat patients and serve as outstanding clinical role models. Other faculty are actively engaged in research aimed at advancing patient care and the science of movement. They investigate and improve movement system function in people with chronic diseases such as obesity, stroke, diabetes, neuropathy, Parkinson's disease and low back pain.

Assistantships and work-study positions provide opportunities for students to work in faculty research laboratories and to see how basic, translational and clinical research move the profession forward.



After graduation

Graduates leave the program as exceptional clinicians. They are trained as generalists but are fully prepared to excel in any practice setting, patient population or specialty area.

- 99% graduate
- 99% typically pass the professional licensure exam on the first attempt (above the national average)
- On average, each student receives at least three job offers
- The vast majority gain a position of their choice before or shortly after graduation
- Alumni practice all across the nation
- Alumni are recognized for excellence by several state and national physical therapy associations

THE PROFESSION

The physical therapy profession offers varied and rewarding career options in clinical practice, administration, research and education. For more information, visit the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) website at apta.org.

Clinical specialty areas

Orthopedic
Cardiovascular/pulmonary
Neurologic
Pediatric
Sports
Geriatric
Women's health
Hand therapy
Clinical electrophysiology
Oncology

Work environments

Outpatient clinics
Rehabilitation centers
Hospitals
Schools
Home care agencies
Nursing homes
Industrial businesses
Fitness centers
Telehealth







Student life

The Program in Physical Therapy is extremely proud of our students. They are well-rounded individuals who come from a variety of educational and cultural backgrounds.

Although our students are committed to their studies, they still find time to relax and have fun. In our supportive learning environment, classmates become fast friends, not competitors, and they bring out the best in each other within and beyond the classroom.

STUDENT OUTREACH

Our students build leadership skills and improve their community through several outreach efforts:

- Organize Run for Research, a 5K/10K run and 1-mile walk to raise funds for the Foundation for Physical Therapy
- Participate in National Biomechanics Day
- Participate in a community service project each fall
- Participate in health fairs at WashU Medicine
- Educate local and international communities about physical therapy
- Sponsor food, clothing and blood drives





Student affinity groups

The Program in Physical Therapy aims to create an environment conducive for all students not just to survive but to thrive academically, personally and professionally. Our students are encouraged to express their authentic selves and be an asset to our program, WashU Medicine and, more importantly, the St. Louis community. All are invited and welcomed to join the WashU Medicine Physical Therapy student groups.

Physical Therapy Inclusion and Diversity (PTID)

was created to promote and foster diversity and inclusion within the program, the university and the community. PTID builds and supports a vibrant community of scholars from diverse backgrounds.

It engages students, faculty and staff in order to build:

- connections to other WashU groups to facilitate collaborative efforts
- visibility and networks to impact broader community
- opportunities for meaningful discussions and learning

International Students Association (ISA) is a supportive space and resource hub which empowers international learners in their transition to WashU Medicine and the city of St. Louis. ISA creates professional and social opportunities where they can thrive, discuss topics such as immigration, English as a second language, inclusion and life in the U.S.

Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color (BIPOC)

supports the interests, needs and diverse backgrounds of BIPOC students. It aims to create safe, inclusive spaces on campus where they can freely share their ideologies and identities. By acknowledging and validating their experiences, BIPOC fosters growth, honesty and relationships across cultural and racial lines.

WUPT PrIDE provides a safe, supportive environment for members of the program who identify as LGBTQIA+. It fosters networking and mentoring, provides training and resources, actively engages in advocacy and maintains a positive presence in the region's LGBTQIA+ community.

For more information, visit

pt.washu.edu/organizations-student-groups.



"With exceptional faculty, a collegial and collaborative culture, fantastic clinical sites throughout the country, and opportunities to participate in teaching, research and other extracurricular activities, WashU Medicine PT provided me with countless ways to grow."

— CAMERON SWICK, DPT '24, Colfax, California

St. Louis



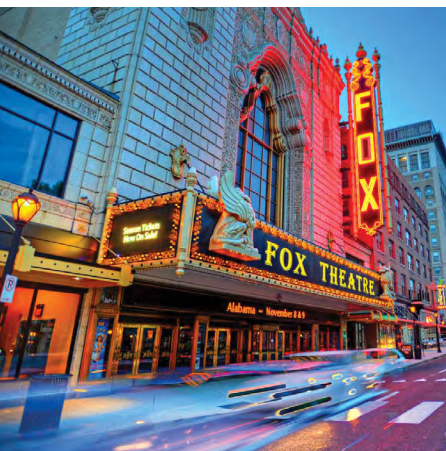
Here you'll find charming neighborhoods, vibrant music, art and culinary scenes, and plenty of fun for nature-lovers and urbanites alike — all packed into an affordable, welcoming city.

The Medical Campus is located in the Central West End neighborhood, which is brimming with eclectic bookstores, coffee houses and sidewalk cafes. A short walk away, The Grove is home to breweries, international eateries, street fairs and more. Housing options include affordable apartments on campus and close by.

Full-time WashU Medicine students are eligible to receive a Metro U-Pass from the university, which provides free access to the entire Metro transit system, including buses and light rail (MetroLink).



Forest Park, located adjacent to the Medical Campus, is a haven for individuals seeking either solitude or outdoor fun. This enormous park, larger than New York's Central Park, offers countless facilities for athletics, cultural activities and fun. The park is home to the Saint Louis Science Center, the Saint Louis Art Museum, the Missouri Historical Society and the nationally recognized Saint Louis Zoo.



Many types of affordable entertainment are available. St. Louis is a sports-minded city that enthusiastically supports Cardinals baseball, Blues hockey, the St. Louis CITY SC soccer team and a number of semi-pro teams. The Missouri Botanical Garden offers beautiful displays year-round. The Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra is among the country's best. The Black Rep — the nation's largest professional African-American theatre company — offers live theater from the Black perspective. The Fox Theater presents Broadway shows, dance performances and concerts.

For more information, visit medicine.washu.edu/about/st-louis.



Prerequisites

The program recommends completing the majority of prerequisite courses prior to applying:

- One year chemistry sequence with labs
- One year physics sequence with labs
- One year of biology courses (course content should include cell structure and function and function of macromolecules)
- One course in anatomy with lab and one course in physiology with lab OR a two-course sequence in anatomy and physiology with labs
- One course in psychology
- One course in statistics

At the time of application, you must have no more than five prerequisite courses outstanding and provide a plan for how all requirements will be met prior to enrollment. All prerequisite courses must be completed with a grade of “C” or better.

Applicants must possess a minimum 3.0 GPA in each of the following PTCAS categories: science, combined science and math, and core PT prerequisites.

Students can better prepare for the rigor and expectations of the program by taking additional coursework that demonstrates competence in critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific inquiry, communication and movement sciences, but it is not required. Examples may include trigonometry; calculus; upper-level psychology; human anatomy with an emphasis on origins, insertions, actions and innervations of muscle; exercise physiology; and biomechanics.

Although a specific number of observation hours (paid or volunteer) are not required for acceptance, we expect applicants to have sufficient exposure to the profession to provide them with an understanding of the scope of physical therapy practice and the willingness to work with a variety of patients in both outpatient and inpatient settings.

International applicants whose native language is not English must take the TOEFL exam within a year of applying. Minimum acceptable scores: iBT: 100, IELTS: 7.0. International transcripts must be evaluated by World Education Services (wes.org) if courses were completed at an institution outside of the United States. Documentation must include course names, grades and credits in American terms.

Student profile

- Overall average GPA: 3.7/4.0
- Average science: 3.6/4.0
- Average science/math: 3.6/4.0
- Average core PT prerequisites: 3.7/4.0

How to apply

Application process

Applicants must apply online using the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS) found at ptcas.org. It is recommended that applicants complete the application as soon as possible, but not before the majority of prerequisites are completed.

Deadlines

January 15: Deposits for admitted applicants are due. Earlier deposits are welcome. This fee is non-refundable and will be applied to tuition after matriculation. If admitted after this date, the deposit is due two weeks after notification of admission.

February 1: Final application deadline. PTCAS must receive all official U.S. transcripts, recommendation letters and TOEFL scores.

Selection process

The program uses rolling admissions; the program's admissions committee reviews all completed applications in the order in which they are received, beginning in September. The committee considers the applicant's GPA, recommendation letters, essays, extracurricular activities and overall interest in physical therapy. A personal interview is not required for admission. The Program in Physical Therapy recruits and enrolls a diverse student body from across the U.S. and often other countries as well.

Matriculation requirements

- All prerequisites completed.
- Baccalaureate degree completed and final transcript submitted, showing date of conferral.
- Current certification in first aid and infant/child/adult CPR (American Heart Association preferred).

Financial assistance

The majority of students qualify for financial assistance. The program offers multiple scholarships and competitive research assistantships to qualified students. Financial aid is available through application.

For more information, visit finaid.med.washu.edu.



WHAT MAKES WASHU MEDICINE PT SPECIAL?

Come see for yourself.

We invite all prospective students and their guests to take a comprehensive look at the school through a half-day campus visit.

- Tour facilities
- Meet with one of our student ambassadors
- Attend a class
- Meet faculty members
- Visit with admissions officers

We also sponsor an annual Fall Open House for all interested students and a Spring DPT Preview for students who are admitted or on the waitlist.

Connect for a tour or virtual visit

To arrange a visit, please contact the Admissions Office at least one week in advance.



Phone: 314-286-1400

Fax: 314-286-1410

Web: pt.washu.edu/visit



Doctor of Physical Therapy

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Web: pt.washu.edu

WashU encourages and gives full consideration to all applicants for admission, financial aid and employment. The university does not discriminate in access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, veteran status, disability or genetic information. Inquiries about compliance should be addressed to the university's Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, Washington University, Campus Box 1184, One Brookings Drive, St. Louis, MO 63130. WashU Medicine is committed to recruiting, enrolling and educating a diverse student body.