

Physical Therapist Assistant Program

Instructional Faculty Consortium Committee Meeting

September 16, 2016

In Attendance: Holly Free, TCSG; Ellen O’Keefe, Diana Carman, Athens Technical College; Stephanie Puffer, Christine Miller, Chattahoochee Tech; Jeanne Welch, Lanier Tech; Denise Edwards, Tamey Howard-Feltner, Atlanta Tech; Donovan Reimche, Augusta Tech; Mary Walker, Central GA Tech; Health Care Dean, Mark Thorne, Columbus Tech. Dr. Rick Hall, Vice President of Academic Affairs representative.

Absent:

Meeting called to order at 10:00.

Introductions were made, welcoming 3 new members: Augusta Tech: Donovan Reimche hired as program chair, Middle Georgia: Mary Walker hired as program chair, Columbus Tech: in exploratory phase- no program chair hired.

Minutes from April 2015 meeting made available to all in attendance on overhead and were reviewed, approved and seconded. Ellen reiterated that the primary issues in 2015 were the removal of medical terminology from the TCSG PTA curriculum and the CAPTE requirements for new programs and program chairs.

TCSG Updates

Holly explained to the group the process for making **changes within TCSG programs** while the KMS standard for PTA programs was visible on the overhead.

All college presidents vote on any change before it is made, even if their college does not have the program under review.

The PROBE process and procedure for bringing about curricular change in a current program, takes a minimum of one year and probably 2 between when a necessary change is identified and the change actually taking place.

Credit hours within PTA programs cannot be changed without approval.

Holly clarified that TCSG is no longer using Compass as an admissions tool and that “Accuplacer” is now available in KMS.

Columbus Dean Mark Thorne asked how a compass score is translated into Accuplacer. He explained that it is logical to expect that a student may have taken the compass test in the past year, but did not seek actual admission until Accuplacer was in effect.

Holly explained how TCSG reached **the decision to eliminate interviews** from all Health programs within the system. She explained that the state attorney considers interviews subjective, and that to minimize liability in a selection process, interviews must be discontinued. Dr Hall and Holly explained that the attorney did not make the new policy randomly or without significant consideration. Because the TCSG has an open access policy, technically an applicant cannot be denied entry into a college, and the attorney believes that an interview, because of its subjective nature, and the possibility that a person may be not selected due to an interview, is against policy. Stephanie stated that PTA programs in open access states have a 30% attrition rate, which will negatively affect graduation rate statistics with not only TCSG, but also CAPTE.

All academic members of the committee voiced their opinion against the no interview policy, and several questions and comments were discussed:

Several members mentioned that the policy will possibly keep out students best suited for healthcare and gave examples of how the student with an excellent background and true desire to become at PTA may be kept out of the program because their GPA may not be in the top of the applicant pool. Most agreed that these students are often better students and clinicians in the long run because their “soft skills” are better than those of the 4.0 student. Several members voiced concern that the 4.0 students may not be good clinical performers which could cause backlash from the clinical sites if they have students whose affect is not the best for treating patients.

Holly stated that all programs should be aware of this possibility and keep data on the class admitted without benefit of an interview. The statement was made that probably the only way that TCSG would reconsider allowing an interview was if CAPTE supported the use of interviews and the consensus was that the group did not believe that would ever be likely.

Ellen asked the group for suggestions on how to determine suitability of an applicant without an interview. Is there a test instrument that would provide objective information about an applicant’s drive and desire ? Stephanie informed the group that her dean approached the legal office regarding 2 or 3 specific tests that could possibly be used to provide insight into an applicant’s suitability and potential for success in health care, each having research supporting their use, but the legal counsel said that no test could be used, regardless of evidence produced.

The group discussed whether letters of recommendation could be considered, but the group felt that letters are subjective and lack inter-rater reliability. The group also discussed whether somehow points could be given for academic rigor, and again the prevailing thought was that the points awarded could be perceived as subjective or biased, and therefore unlikely to be approved. Applicant essays were also discussed as a possible way to understand an applicant’s motivation and the group was informed by Holly that essays are not allowed.

Holly clarified by stating that at this time, an applicant’s grades and TEAS score are the only acceptable factors that can be considered when selecting applicants for admission into PTA

programs within the TCSG. The only limit to the selection process that is in writing is that there can be no interview, written or oral. She also shared with the group that TCSG is even questioning whether grades and TEAS are both necessary to determine applicant suitability. Holly also reiterated that observation hours cannot technically be required, and that no recommendations can be attached to observation hour forms because of the subjective nature of a recommendation.

Holly informed the group that there is the opinion of some within the TCSG that observations can actually involve a level of bias because some students may experience an undue hardship trying to obtain hours because they may not have equal access to observation opportunities. She clarified that observations may only be considered bias free if the program arranges the observation experience for the student so that all students would have guaranteed access for observation. The majority of programs did not support this notion. Holly restated that there is no current written policy on allowing observation hours to be part of the admissions requirement and that the only current policy prohibits interviewing applicants.

Donovan questioned why prior health care experience could not be counted as objective information? For example, if an applicant had worked two years as a physical therapy aide, they would be awarded 2 points. The general consensus was that this could be examined further, and may or may not be acceptable.

The group consensus regarding the elimination of interviews was that some of the students with the best potential to succeed in the PTA profession may not be accepted without the benefit of the interview because they don't have a 4.0. The group agreed that often the very best future clinicians are not the 4.0 students coming into the program. Ellen reiterated to the group to monitor the performance of this cohort of students who were admitted without an interview.

Course Competencies / Learning Outcomes Update

Donovan asked for clarification about Lab 2 and Lab 3. It was explained that the Lab 2 should consist of lecture, demonstration, article discussion and case study presentations. Lab 3 is for demonstrations, discussion and more time for students to practice skills with supervision. Holly indicated that the TCSG description is somewhat nondefinitive on purpose so that each program is allowed some leeway to determine content or emphasis in each section.

A discussion followed concerning specifics regarding course competencies and learning outcomes. KMS supports 5-6 competencies per course, but more numerous outcomes which can be modified or individualized per program. KMS outcomes should be listed on the official course syllabus as objectives, but each program can add or individualize additional outcomes. Ellen stated that the KMS competencies are posted on the college website, but that the actual student syllabus is much more specific and individualized. She also reiterated that a program is allowed to teach above the KMS standard. She then called for all programs to make a better

effort at making KMS competencies and learning outcomes match individual program objectives and syllabi.

New Business

Ellen offered an invitation for new program directors to come to Athens if they felt it would be beneficial for them.

An informal discussion occurred about number of faculty and adjuncts. Chattahoochee has 2 full time faculty and 3 lab assistants. Atlanta Tech has 2 full time faculty and is currently searching for a third part time faculty member who would work 25 hours per week.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

Next meeting will occur in Fall of 2017 on a Friday. Ellen and Holly will determine the exact date at a later time. Ellen adjourned the meeting at 12:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Carman, PT, DPT