



# College of Health Professions

## Doctor of Physical Therapy

**The Program in Physical Therapy** prepares graduates for professional practice in physical therapy as general practitioners who demonstrate self-directed, ongoing learning, an understanding of self in the context of professional role, competency in clinical practice, a commitment to the application of professional skills, knowledge of self in service to others, and a commitment to effect positive change within the greater community.

*Our program was ranked the #1 PT program in Connecticut, one of the top 5 programs in New England, and among the top 25% of programs in the nation according to the most recent U.S. News and World Report's Best Graduate Schools.*

### DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY DEGREE PROGRAM

Sacred Heart University offers a graduate program of study leading to a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT). **The DPT is a clinical doctoral degree** that prepares graduates to enter the physical therapy profession, and should be distinguished from an academic doctoral degree such as a PhD, EdD, ScD, or DSc that are earned through advanced graduate study.

The DPT is a first professional degree and is not intended to prepare graduates for careers in research or academia, although physical therapists with a DPT may choose to pursue these goals through further graduate study. Program applicants must hold a baccalaureate degree and have completed the necessary prerequisites **or** be an undergraduate degree candidate at Sacred Heart University.

The graduate program is a 3-year (6 semester) course of study available on a **full-time basis only**, in order to allow for professional socialization and the integration of course work. Full-time clinical education occurs during the summers between the first and second year (8 weeks), between the second and third years (10 weeks) and during the final semester of study (20 weeks).

### THE PROFESSION

The primary objective of physical therapy is to **promote optimum human health and function**. As defined by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Physical therapy is a form of health care that prevents, identifies, corrects, and alleviates acute or prolonged movement dysfunction of anatomic or physiological origin.

### Sacred Heart University

- SHU is the second-largest Catholic university in New England with over 6,000 in attendance.
- *The Princeton Review* includes SHU among the *Best 376 Colleges*, while *U.S. News & World Report's America's Best Colleges* ranks SHU in the top tier of Master's Universities in the North in its annual college rankings.
- Sacred Heart University is set on 65 acres in suburban Fairfield, Connecticut, ranked in the top places to live in the Northeast and #9 in the country in *Money* magazine's list of "Best Places to Live." Fairfield is 90 minutes from Manhattan and 150 minutes from Boston.



# Doctor of Physical Therapy

## UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES – *Why you should consider Sacred Heart University*

**Faculty:** The department includes exceptional faculty with more than 100 years of aggregated teaching experience across the 16 faculty members. Faculty are well established in the physical therapy community and are nationally recognized for scholarship, service to the profession, or teaching excellence. Of the faculty, 8 hold an academic doctorate, 5 hold a clinical doctorate, 3 hold graduate degrees in business administration or public health, 10 are board certificated by the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties, 1 certified lymphedema therapist, 1 Fulbright Specialist, and 1 Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists.

Dr. Michael Emery, PT, EdD, FAPTA, Chair of the Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Science has been selected as a **Catherine Worthingham Fellow**. This is the **most prestigious recognition** given by the American Physical Therapy Association to a member of the PT profession.

For a full listing of all of our faculty members' accomplishments and specializations, please go to [http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/583\\_faculty\\_staff.cfm](http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/583_faculty_staff.cfm).

### **Motion Analysis Laboratory:**

The Motion Analysis Laboratory is equipped with **state-of-the-art** advanced technology to facilitate disciplined scientific inquiry in the field of human movement science.

### **Integrated Clinical Experiences:**

Structured clinical activities integrated into classes during each of the first four academic semesters help students understand the practical application of semester content, as well as facilitate the process of professional development.

### **Physical Therapy Faculty Practice:**

The practice includes two large clinics on campus and several contractual services provided in skilled nursing facilities, assisted living centers, sports teams, and programs for children with special needs. The practice offers opportunities for faculty to remain current in the field and engage in clinical research. Additionally, students may have the opportunity to work with faculty and staff in the clinical environment.

### **Community & Service Activities:**

These activities include the operation of the College of Health Professions Health & Wellness Center that serves the greater Bridgeport area and international service opportunities.

**Rankings:** Sacred Heart University's DPT program was ranked as the **#1 PT program** in the state of CT in the most recent **U.S. News and World Report's Best Graduate Schools**. This also puts the DPT program in the top 5 programs in New England and among the top 25% in the nation.

### **Laptop Program and a Wireless**

**Campus:** DPT students can rent a University laptop to support our mission of anytime, anywhere learning. The University staffs an in-house technical support team to address any issues related to our laptops, and students have constant access from the wireless network throughout campus.

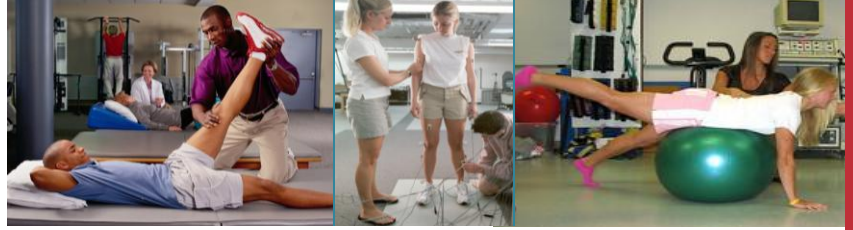
**Special Projects:** Students complete two special projects during the program. The 'capstone' experience occurs during the 4th and 5th semesters and is the culmination of the evidence in practice and patient-based portion of the curriculum. The community practice project occurs during the 5th semester. Each special project develops the students' ability to access, interpret, synthesize, and apply relevant research literature to patient or practice situations with the goal of using evidence to inform practice and understand the gaps in the professional body of knowledge.

### **Problem-based learning (PBL) design:**

PBL places emphasis on the development of a reflective practitioner by teaching students to learn from and **solve clinical problems**. Curriculum content is organized around carefully designed patient or professional practice problems that students study, discuss, and research **in small groups** called tutorials. Students develop the ability to identify, organize and synthesize materials relevant to each case in a self-directed manner that indicates responsibility for one's own learning as well as the learning of the group. The tutorial group work develops reasonable interdependence among students and supports the use of peers in learning and **problem solving**.

Prospective students should consider themselves comfortable with this highly interactive, small group-focused learning style. Clinical supervisors and employers of our graduates have acknowledged a clinical readiness in terms of **independence in clinical decision-making**, efficiency in practice, and a self-directedness in professional development that is important for today's practitioner.

## PREREQUISITE COURSES



Matriculation into the DPT program requires: the successful completion of undergraduate prerequisites (see descriptions) **prior to beginning the DPT program in August.**

Inquiries regarding course equivalents should be made in writing to the Office of Graduate Admissions, Kathy Dilks: [dilksk@sacredheart.edu](mailto:dilksk@sacredheart.edu).

### **BIOLOGY** 8 credits.

Two semesters of college biology with laboratories, to include: cell biology, energetics, genetics and evolution. Organismal functions should be studied, including active transport systems, nutrition, control of internal environment, hormonal and neural control and reproduction. (SHU equivalent: BI 111/113, BI 112/114)

### **GENERAL CHEMISTRY** 8 credits.

A two-semester college sequence with laboratories, to include: laws and theories of chemistry, atomic and molecular structure, chemical bonding, and acid/base theories. Principles of thermodynamics and electrochemistry, ionic relationships and basic concepts of biochemistry should be included. A semester of inorganic and a semester of organic chemistry, each with laboratories, will also fulfill the requirement. (SHU equivalent: CH 151/153, CH 152/154)

### **HUMAN ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY**

8 credits. (Need to have been earned within the past 10 years) A two-semester college sequence with laboratories, to include: (1) systemic human anatomy of cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, neurosensory/motor, respiratory, digestive, excretory and integumentary organ systems; and (2) systemic human physiology of cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, neurosensory/motor, respiratory, digestive, excretory and integumentary organ systems. (SHU equivalent: BI 131-132)

### **GENERAL PHYSICS** 8 credits.

A two-semester college sequence with laboratories, to include: vectors and forces; linear and angular acceleration; concepts of work and energy including such basic instruments as levers and pulleys; and mechanical and thermal properties of matter. Topics of vibration, light and sound wave forms, electricity, magnetism and properties of electromagnetic fields should also be included. (SHU equivalent: PY 111/113, PY 112/114)

### **MATH** 3-4 credits.

A one-semester course of pre-calculus level math or above to prepare students for the concepts of physics described above. Concepts should include at least set theory, symbolic logic, algebraic functions, polynomial and rational functions and analytic trigonometry. (SHU equivalent: MA 140)

### **STATISTICS** 3-4 credits. (Need to have been earned within the past 10 years)

A one-semester course in probability and elementary statistics to include: descriptive and inferential statistics such as concepts of distribution, central tendency, variation and consideration of both parametric and non-parametric tests. (SHU equivalent: MA 131)

### **PSYCHOLOGY** 6-8 credits.

Two semesters of psychology, to include: general or introductory psychology and a second course of the student's choice.

### **Combining Undergraduate & Graduate Study:**

Sacred Heart University offers qualified University undergraduates the opportunity to complete an undergraduate degree and a DPT degree within 6 years.

The ability to take advantage of the "3+3" option (3 years of undergraduate course work and 3 years of graduate course work) is available only to students who elect to complete their undergraduate studies with a major in Exercise Science, Psychology, or Biology. Students choosing a 3+3 option work closely with their undergraduate advisor to follow a specific sequence of study in their chosen undergraduate major.

**The 3+3 option requires course work in the summers between the Freshman and Sophomore years regardless of undergraduate major,** with the summer work varying by major. With appropriate planning, summer course work may be completed at other universities offering equivalent courses.

# Admission Requirements & Additional Information



## ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

**Admissions decisions will be made based on these six criteria:**

- Physical therapy prerequisite coursework GPA of 3.2 or better
- Overall undergraduate GPA of 3.2 or better
- Two strong letters of recommendations from an academic and supervisor source
- Relevant activity/shadowing in the health care field
- Strong and thoughtful essay
- Successful interview with the Physical Therapy Admissions Committee upon invitation.

## ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

1. Complete an application for Graduate Study:
  - **External** applicants complete the National PT application online at [www.PTCAS.org](http://www.PTCAS.org).
  - **Internal** SHU applicants complete the SHU graduate application online at [www.sacredheart.edu](http://www.sacredheart.edu).
2. Two letters of recommendation: one from a past employer, one from a past teacher. Helpful guidelines appear at [http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/25874\\_reference\\_letter\\_guidelines.cfm](http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/25874_reference_letter_guidelines.cfm).
3. Official transcripts from **all** colleges and universities attended. Please Note: If you had sent transfer credits to your current school's registrar's office, you still need to submit ALL prior schools' transcripts for review regardless if they appear on your final transcript.
4. Application fee
5. Admissions essay as requested in the online application.

## DEADLINES

### College Graduates

#### & College Seniors:

Completed application deadline for Early Decision is December 15 and the **final** deadline for completed applications and materials to be received is January 15<sup>th</sup>.

### Internal 3+3 students:

Completed graduate applications are due by April 15<sup>th</sup> of your Sophomore year and you will be notified by October of your Junior year if you have been invited to an early interview.

## INTERVIEWS

Invitations to interviews will be sent shortly after the early decision deadline and will continue until mid-February. The final class will typically be set by the end of March and be comprised of approximately 65 students.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

There are a limited number of research and staff assistantships available to full-time graduate students on a competitive basis. Student loans, deferred payment plans and a variety of other programs are available through the Office of Financial Assistance. For links to the FAFSA and Graduate Confidential forms please call Tel. (203) 371-7980 or go to: [http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/774\\_forms.cfm](http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/774_forms.cfm)

## THE EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

The APTA reports that approximately 90,000 physical therapists practice in the United States today.

### The job market is strong for physical therapists.

Long-term employment prospects appear good as physical therapists become increasingly involved with growing segments of the population in need of health care services, such as the elderly, children with special needs and health services in rural and urban settings. The median income of a salaried, full-time physical therapist is approximately \$66,200, depending on experience and location.

## WHO CAN I CALL IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Kathy Dilks, M.S.  
Director of

**Graduate Admissions**  
Sacred Heart University

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Fairfield, CT 06825

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