

## BACKGROUND

**Cleveland State University**  
Doctor of Physical Therapy

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION

**This program meets Regents' standards for graduate degree programs. The Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduate Study voted to approve the new degree program on a provisional basis for a period of four years. At the end of the four-year provisional period, Cleveland State University will be asked to prepare a report for submission to the Board of Regents. The report should address the general effectiveness of the program in meeting its stated goals.**

Cleveland State University seeks Regents' approval for a new professional doctoral degree program entitled Doctor of Physical Therapy.

National organizations in the health sciences have been leading the development of a number of relatively new professional doctoral degrees, including such programs as Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.), Occupational Therapy Doctorate (O.T.D.), and Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.). These new doctoral programs focus on professional practice rather than fundamental research in the discipline, the hallmark of a traditional Ph.D. program.

At the national level the practice of physical therapy has evolved from a state of dependent supervised practice into a state of independent, supervisory practice within a broader spectrum of settings including industrial and educational settings as well as a wide range of traditional medical settings. All of these changes in physical therapy are consistent with recent evolutionary changes in the modern health care environment. The increasing demands and new supervisory duties required of practitioners in this field now call for higher levels of independent judgment and complex problem solving. It is these changes in the profession that have driven the transition to the D.P.T. degree as the entry-level professional qualification. It is noteworthy that, to date, all but two states have enacted legislation to support some level of autonomous practice (*i.e.*, no physician referral required) for physical therapists. In Ohio House Bill 35 (January 6, 2004) allows for direct public access to physical therapy services and makes physical therapists the entry point into the health care system for individuals with limitations in movement and functional activities.

Because the D.P.T. degree will replace the corresponding master's degree program (M.P.T.) as the entry-level degree for practice in physical therapy, the existing CSU master's degree program will be phased out as the new D.P.T. program is mounted in the summer term of 2007. The new D.P.T. program will enroll twenty-eight students, which is the same number currently admitted into the M.P.T. program.

The hope is that CSU physical therapy graduates will continue to meet national certification standards while the program continues to meet, or exceed, national academic accreditation requirements. Consequently, the D.P.T. curriculum builds upon the long-standing M.P.T. curriculum with the addition of two new applied clinical research project courses specifically tailored for doctoral-level work.

The Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduate Study (RACGS) reviewed extensive written documentation provided by Cleveland State University on this proposed new doctoral program and, in response to expert reviews of these materials, provided the University with appropriate critical comments. The University, in turn, provided additional written materials and sent its program representatives to the March 30, 2007 meeting of RACGS. After a detailed presentation by representatives of the University's Physical Therapy Program, which was followed by questions from individual campus representatives, RACGS voted to approve the new Doctor of Physical Therapy degree program on a provisional basis for a period of four years.

A major concern is related to the projected national distribution of professional doctorates which predicts that there will be nine states with four or more professional doctoral degree programs while there will be seventeen states without any professional doctoral degree programs. This prediction raises the possibility that over time the need for graduates of these programs will shift to those states where the net in-migration of retirees is heaviest. Ohio potentially could become a net supplier of professional doctorates to other regions of the nation. This possibility forces consideration of the provisional approval now, with a subsequent follow-up review, after an appropriate period of time, to determine if the majority of the graduates are finding employment within the State of Ohio.

Staff recommend that the CSU D.P.T. program receive provisional approval for a period of four years. At the end of the four-year provisional period, Cleveland State University will be asked to prepare a report for submission to the Board of Regents. The report should address the general effectiveness of the program in meeting its stated goals, including the ability of the program graduates to find employment within the State of Ohio. After review and discussion of the report with representatives of the University, the Board of Regents will consider one of three possible actions:

1. Full approval of the program either with, or without, modifications;
2. Continuation of the provisional status of the program for a finite period, not to exceed five years; or
3. Withdrawal of program approval.

Depending upon the success of the new D.P.T. program in graduating professionals who find employment within the State of Ohio, the Regents may consider placing a limit upon the total state share of instruction to be earned by each professional doctoral degree program.

It should be noted that the implementation of this new program will not impact the University's portion of the doctoral state share of instruction. Unlike newly developed research doctoral degree programs, which universities must fund entirely out of existing state share of instruction revenue streams, new professional doctoral degree programs are funded at the appropriate master's and professional level and only for a maximum of three years for each student.