



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ACADEMIC PHYSICAL THERAPY

MOTION

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PROPOSED BY:

Member Affiliate: Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska.
ACAPT Representative: Kirk Peck, Chair, Department of Physical Therapy

That the following be adopted:

I move that the American Council of Academic Physical Therapy (ACAPT) develop a National Student Honor Society for the profession of physical therapy.

Support Statement:

1. THERE SHOULD BE EVIDENCE THAT THE MOTION IS OF NATIONAL SCOPE OR IMPORTANCE:

The profession of physical therapy currently has no formal professional honor society to recognize and promote academic excellence, leadership, and service within the profession from student to graduate. Other professions, including medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and nursing have all created honor societies to specifically recognize and award outstanding students and practitioners.¹⁻⁷

The creation of a PT student honor society would publically highlight ACAPT's mission to promote the highest standards of excellence in the profession and demonstrate an authentic commitment to recognizing student achievement. An honor society is essentially what the profession of physical therapy needs, especially as all health professions advocate for greater societal recognition in the process of national healthcare reform.

A Physical Therapy student honor society is consistent with the vision and objectives of ACAPT. In part, the ACAPT seeks to, *"Advance the enterprise of academic physical therapy by promoting the highest standards of excellence. For the purposes of the council and its activities, academic physical therapy includes all aspects of physical therapist education, including clinical education, and post-professional education"*.⁸

A recognized student honor society would demonstrate ACAPT's commitment to promoting excellence and integrity within the profession by establishing a process that highlights outstanding student achievements. Students represent the next generation of physical therapy practice from all aspects of care, and if the profession authentically desires to identify itself as both individualistic and collaborative among all health professions then the time is right to formally recognize future leaders for their exceptional contributions to the profession.

A study completed in 2011 by students and experts in physical therapy education indicated widespread acceptance of developing a student honor society.⁹ Mirivosky et al surveyed administrators and faculty in all accredited PT programs in the United States. Eighty-three out of a total of two-hundred and one institutional surveys (41%) were returned. Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated support for a national honors society while only eleven percent disagreed with the idea mostly due to perceived limitations such as cost to administer, qualifications for acceptance, and raising a competitive spirit in the profession that currently does not exist.⁹ However, the primary theme from data analysis in the study was in support of establishing an honors society as long as appropriate administrative concerns were addressed.



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Finally, it should be noted that due to time constraints on when the current proposal came to fruition, the concept of an honor society was never formally discussed with other ACAPT representatives. Therefore at this time I cannot attest to support of other ACAPT members.

2. MOTIONS AND ACCOMPANYING SUPPORT STATEMENTS SHOULD DEMONSTRATE ADEQUATE BACKGROUND RESEARCH OF THE ISSUE, WHICH CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH

The current APTA Vision Statement asserts an exceptionally high standard for the profession of physical therapy through one profound sentence that reads, *“Transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience”*.¹⁰ A justifiable transformation of society without doubt will entail the expertise of both experienced and newly educated physical therapists with exceptional qualities of character and integrity. The APTA essentially raised the bar for ALL academic programs of physical therapy to produce the highest quality and competency of graduates ever witnessed in the history of the profession. This level of expectation for the profession demands that mechanisms of recognition are in place to honor those individuals who truly excel in academics, leadership, and service since they represent the future of what the profession will become. A student honors society is therefore an outstanding option to help achieve the vision of APTA.

In the 42nd APTA Mary McMillan Lecture, Dr. Gail Jensen alluded to the need for greater accountability by the PT profession to establish its own mechanism for measuring excellence. In reference to the present state of affairs Jensen stated, *“In physical therapy education, we also suffer from the “Lake Wobegon effect” as we struggle to agree on any shared benchmarks of excellence, as we are all above average”* (pp. 1687).¹¹ If the PT profession is unwilling to establish its own standards of excellence, then others will do so regardless of permission. In fact, evidence for this occurring within the profession already exists by simply recognizing the impression made upon student applicants in response to the *US News and World Report’s* national ranking of physical therapy programs. The reality is that public perception of academic quality in physical therapy education is commonly hinged on national rankings based on criteria established by external agencies. The time is now for the profession to internally expand upon its own mechanisms of recognizing excellence in physical therapy education. A student honor society is simply one of many ways how that goals can be achieved.

3. DETERMINE PROBABLE FISCAL IMPACT OF ADOPTING THE MOTION

The fiscal impact of initiating a National Student Honors Society is difficult to estimate- Issues for discussion will include the costs of selecting award nominations, organizing formal ceremonial events, purchasing or creating recipient awards, added administrative duties by the Council, and other personnel costs. It is feasible that overall costs could be allocated among ACAPT members through increased fees to the Council or by utilizing current annual dues to off-set added expenses. These issues will require greater exploration by experts in budgetary affairs if the Motion succeeds.

RELATIONSHIP TO PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ACAPT:

This was addressed in the proposal.

RELEVANT POSITION/STANDARD/GUIDELINE/POLICY/PROCEDURE:

No existing position statements or guidelines relevant to the proposed motion have been identified



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References

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