What Makes Us Unique

The UCSF/SFSU Doctor of Physical Therapy program prides itself on being one of the top ranked public programs in the country. In addition, here are 15 reasons why UCSF/SFSU should be your choice for physical therapy education.

1. Joint Program between Two Prestigious Institutions
UCSF and SFSU each bring their unique strengths to the partnership. Our accrediting body, the Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), has even remarked on the value of this partnership, saying: "the program is unique in that students are provided educational opportunities at two distinctly different but related universities, providing them with a strong theoretical foundation in the sciences and research while simultaneously helping them translate that knowledge into clinical practice, a commitment to the community, and social justice."

2. Diverse Student Body
Our students come from varied academic and cultural backgrounds and experiences. Students' baccalaureate majors range from business, to anthropology, exercise science, psychology, English, kinesiology, and many more. The program also participates in numerous outreach events targeted to underrepresented populations in the physical therapy profession. This diversity in the student body strengthens the program and reflects on our constantly changing world.

3. Access to a Range of Clinical Sites
Our program has affiliations throughout the state of California. Students play an active role in selecting their clinical experiences, ensuring completion of a range of clinical experiences in outpatient and inpatient settings. Students are also encouraged to identify new sites, and to participate in the expansion of the database of clinical affiliations offered to future cohorts of students.

4. Leader in Physical Therapy Education
UCSF has been offering programs in physical therapy since 1942, beginning with a Certificate in Physical Therapy. The UCSF/SFSU faculty consists of leaders in the profession, renowned researchers, and exemplary teachers. Many of the core faculty are currently practicing clinicians at a range of sites, including the UCSF Outpatient Faculty Practice, UCSF Health & Wellness Center, UCSF Medical Center, and SFSU Student Health Center.

5. Physical Location
Our program is located in the heart of San Francisco, with easy access to world-renowned medical facilities, including the UCSF Medical Center, UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital San Francisco, UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland, San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center, San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center, UCSF Orthopedic Institute, and the UCSF Outpatient Physical Therapy Faculty Practice. Each of these sites are used for clinical and academic instruction.

When not in class, students can explore a diverse array of restaurants, cultural activities, events, and opportunities to get out into nature. UCSF is also a short walk from San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, a large urban park boasting over 1,000 acres of public land.

6. Accreditation Status
UCSF’s physical therapy program accreditation status has been active since the inception of the certificate program in 1942. The DPT program was granted full accreditation status again in November of 2013, with the next review scheduled for 2021.

7. How Our Students Learn
Our program is unique in that the skills students needed to succeed in their undergraduate careers are no longer required in the program. No longer do students approach their learning as a competition against other students; instead, we foster a collaborative atmosphere in which students are expected to help their cohort-mates succeed. Learning in the program is often self-directed, inquiry-driven, and case-based, ensuring that students are developing the lifelong learning skills required of physical therapy providers.

8. Faculty-Student Ratio
The full-time faculty to student ratio is one faculty member to 11 students. The program incorporates 15 additional instructors who teach content relevant to their areas of expertise, and another 225 guest lecturers, lab assistants, practical exam proctors, teaching assistants, and standardized patients who volunteer their time and expertise to the program.

9. Interprofessional Education
In the program, students have opportunities to participate in interprofessional education activities. Students take courses with learners in other professions (e.g., pharmacy, medicine) and participate in an interprofessional education curriculum that brings learners from medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, and physical therapy together at key points throughout the three years of the program. Students also have the opportunity to serve as teaching assistants in anatomy for medicine and pharmacy courses. Finally, all students participate in an early mobilization program through the UCSF Medical Center, beginning in the first semester in the program. Students work directly with physicians, physical therapists, and nurses to educate patients on the benefits of early mobilization post-surgical procedures.

10. Early Clinical Experiences
Students work with patients in clinical settings starting in the second semester of the program. During the first year, students spend four full days in inpatient and outpatient clinical sites throughout San Francisco, working with patients and practicing their assessment, clinical reasoning, and documentation skills.

11. Elective Opportunities
Throughout the three years of the program students have opportunities to participate in elective coursework to explore new areas of interest or to further their knowledge and skills in one area of concentration. Examples of electives offered include: research with a faculty member; manual therapy skills; sports medicine; running biomechanics; early mobilization in the ICU; pelvic floor physical therapy; physical therapy for dancers; TeenFit adolescent weight management and coaching program; and neuro group. Students are also encouraged to identify new elective opportunities they’d like the program to set up.
12. Above Average Graduation, Employment, & First Attempt Licensure Pass Rates
The program boasts a three-year average 97% graduation rate and 100% employment rate. The 3-year average first attempt pass rate on the licensure exam is 96.5%, and the ultimate pass rate is 100%. Our three-year averages are well above the national average for PT programs.

13. Professionalism Curriculum
All students participate in a course sequence throughout the program that addresses concepts related to professionalism, such as: accountability, compassion and humility, professional excellence, social responsibility, and working relationships. This course sequence provides students with time for reflection on the reasons they chose to become healthcare providers and to practice the interpersonal skills needed to work with a diverse range of patients.

14. Location within the UCSF School of Medicine
Our program is housed within the UCSF School of Medicine, the only program in the State of California to be located within a medical school. This relationships allows our program close proximity to physicians who are able to share their perspective and expertise on clinical diagnoses relevant to physical therapy.

15. Classroom and Laboratory Facilities
Our faculty and students have access to state-of-the-art facilities at both the UCSF and SFSU campuses for physical therapy education. At SFSU, the program has two dedicated spaces with combined lecture and laboratory spaces that allow courses to easily switch between both formats. At UCSF, the program has access to a world-renowned Anatomy Learning Center [1], a Simulation Center [2], a Clinical Skills Center [3], and classroom spaces that can accommodate lecture and small group discussions.