

NEWS RELEASE

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University of Saint Mary Earns Key Approval to Launch Doctor of Physical Therapy Program

DPT Would Be USM's First Doctorate Program

(Leavenworth, Kan.)—The University of Saint Mary has passed a major milestone in its work to establish the university's first doctorate program—the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT). The Higher Learning Commission this month approved an extension of USM's accreditation to include the DPT program, which is under development

The university now has the green light to move forward with seeking specified accreditation for the DPT program from the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE).

"This is a crucial step forward in establishing our program," said Dr. Mark Horacek, director of USM's DPT program. "A tremendous amount of work went into preparing for this step and I'm very pleased with this outcome."

The next step for the Saint Mary DPT is to seek candidate status from CAPTE, which will allow the university to begin accepting students in the spring.*

University President Sister Diane Steele called the Higher Learning Commission approval a significant historical event for the university.

"As a university we are growing. Nowhere is this more evident than in the development of our first doctorate," President Steele said. "We've made substantial changes to Saint Mary's main campus to accommodate the DPT, both in terms of hiring staff and in terms of a major re-utilization of our building space. As such, this is an exciting moment for us, and we are elated to be moving forward on a program that will educate caring professionals who will serve our aging baby boomer population and beyond."

Dr. Bryan Le Beau, USM's academic vice president, said the creation of the DPT builds on the university's already strong commitment to health care programs and educating the health care professionals of tomorrow.

"Our nursing programs are highly-regarded, with student nurses who were recently recognized for exceeding the national average on licensing exams," he said, noting that the Saint Mary nursing department received a certificate of excellence by the Kansas State Board of Nursing this spring.

"We have multiple pre-professional health paths, and a solid record of our students earning entrance into medical school."

Dr. Le Beau added that the creation of the DPT would lay the foundations for the university to create future doctorate programs.

Dr. Horacek hopes to start DPT classes in June of 2012. Eventually, the program should employ nine to 10 faculty members and several adjunct faculty and admit as many as 40 students each year. Students would study for nine semesters.

Once in place, USM's DPT program will be only the third such program in the Kansas City area. Dr. Horacek hopes to have attained full accreditation for the program just before the first class graduates in 2015.

Visit www.stmary.edu/dpt to learn more about USM's doctor in physical therapy program.

The University of Saint Mary is a Catholic co-educational applied liberal arts university founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The University of Saint Mary is located at 4100 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, Kan., with additional locations in Overland Park and Kansas City, Kan. Visit www.stmary.edu for more information.

**The University of Saint Mary is seeking accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; phone; 703-706-3245; accreditation@apta.org). The program will submit an Application for Candidacy, which is the formal application required in the pre-accreditation stage. Submission of this document does not assure that the program will be granted Candidate for Accreditation status nor does it assure that the program will be granted Accreditation.*

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