

PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM
NEWSLETTER
FALL 2024

Message from Program Director, Jessica Niemann

**Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Clarkson
College Physical Therapist Assistant Program!**

Thirty years ago, in 1994, Clarkson College identified a need to provide the physical therapy workforce with high quality, ethical and compassionate physical therapist assistants, and the Traditional PTA program was born.

Since that time, the PTA program has built a path of excellence and innovation through expansion and technological advances. The program has supplied the workforce with over 600 professionally trained PTAs by expanding to include a Transfer PTA program and a Bachelor of Science in PTA degree completion program. In 2009, the Transfer PTA program was established for individuals with a previous associate's degree, bachelor's degree or a minimum of 35 college credits to earn their PTA degree in 16 months, allowing them to quickly enter the workforce. In 2017, the Bachelor of Science in PTA program became the 2nd program in the nation to offer PTAs the opportunity to advance their degree to a bachelor's degree to expand PTA skills and further leadership development. Then, in 2020, the Transfer PTA program increased access to PTA education for individuals in rural areas and those working weekdays by changing to hybrid mode of delivery.

Through all the growth, the program has continued to stay centered on compassion and excellence. Service learning is embedded throughout the curriculum to not only foster safe spaces for students to practice technical skills, but also offer opportunities to develop empathy and interpersonal skills. The PTA faculty continue to contribute to the profession through research and advancement in education. Recent accomplishments include expansion of simulation experiences, interprofessional education, online lab skills videos, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging curriculum.

It is an exciting time for PTA education and the next 30 years are sure to bring continued enrichment to the PTA profession!



Congratulations, Class of August 2024

You were a studious yet humorous class. You knew how to buckle down and get the things done, but also had plenty of comic relief to lighten the mood along the way. We wish you the best as your journey transitions from academics to the workforce.

May you continue to strive toward excellence as you bring forth quality, ethical, and compassionate patient care.



Student Updates

We were excited to bring in new faces and energy into the PTA program with the start of the fall semester. Total enrollment for the PTA program is 61 students.

Board Pass Rates

Thank you to faculty, clinical instructors, service partners, advisory board members and all who support the PTA program for your support. Your efforts and contributions make a difference in allowing our program to supply the workforce with exceptional PTAs who will continue a path of lifelong learning and improving patient outcomes. Please view our [graduate outcomes](#).

Faculty Highlights

The PTA program welcomed **Dr. Avery Dickinson** in July. She is a graduate of the UNMC DPT program and brings a wealth of experience in outpatient and acute care settings as well as specialty area of rural health care. She is currently serving on our clinical education team. You may get the opportunity to meet her during clinical midterm visits in the near future!



Jessica Wissink, DPT, PT

Clarkson College

Pat Perry Faculty of the Year Award

Dr. Wissink was selected as the 2024 Dr. Patricia Book Perry Faculty of the Year from a pool of very qualified candidates. This award recognizes her dedication and commitment to the values and mission of Clarkson College. Dr Wissink promotes a positive and inclusive learning environment and inspires students to engage with the college, community, and profession in new and exciting ways. She earned the highest scholarship award offered at Clarkson College through her initiative to create professional lab skill videos to enhance the delivery of online content, not only for PTA students, but for other health care programs as well. She was a contributor to the PTA Clinical Reasoning Assessment Tool research which was presented at ELC in Oct 2023, and she has presented regionally and nationally regarding the integration of Interprofessional Education in curriculum.

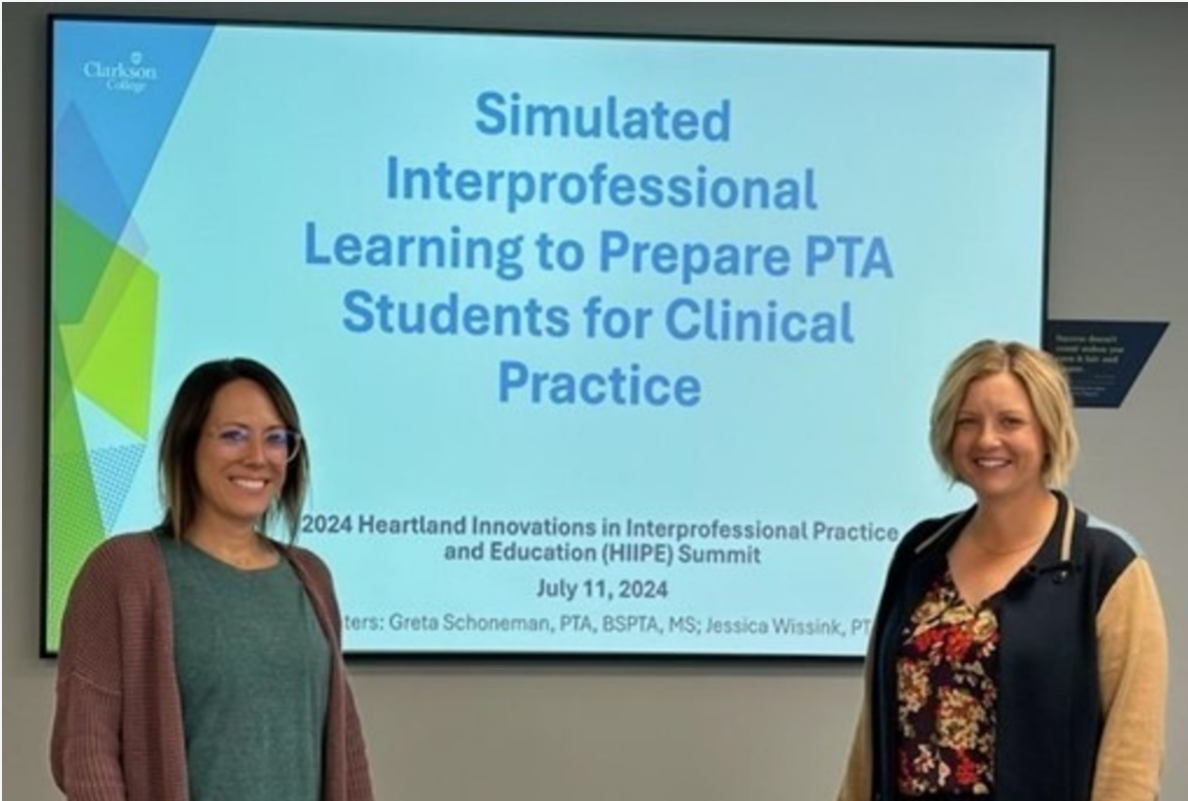


Congratulations!

Program Enhancements

Poster Presentation

Greta Schoneman and **Dr. Wissink** presented a poster presentation titled "Simulated Interprofessional Learning to Prepare PTA Students for Clinical Practice" at the 2024 HIIPE Summit in July. This presentation stems from the new course design of PTA 111 Clinical Readiness, designed to assist our students with increasing overall confidence, communication skills, and critical thinking and decision-making skills prior to clinical practicums. The research for this presentation incorporated a pre and post survey with our PTA students during a simulation experience involving Clarkson College nursing students as mock patients.





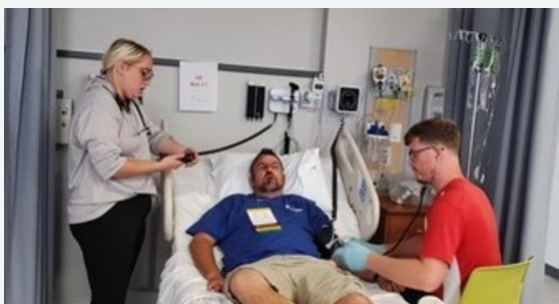
Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

Clarkson College has enhanced diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in curriculum by implementing the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) for all faculty and students.

The PTA program piloted the IDI program in Fall 2023 which has now been implemented collegewide. The curriculum consists of IDI assessments to gather thoughts surrounding cultures and how individuals engage in cultural differences and commonalities. This is followed up with individual debriefing sessions with a Qualified Administrator to offer conversation for further development of cultural responsiveness.

Mass Casualty Simulation Event

PTA students joined students from other health care programs for a Mass Casualty simulation event on September 19th. PTA students practiced their skills by getting subjective information, taking vitals, transferring patients, and more! The event promoted interprofessional collaboration and students gained a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a variety of health care professionals.



Service & Community Partners

MSforward, Heartland Neurological Therapy and Wellness Center, and Pediatric Therapy Center

We greatly appreciate our service-learning partners including MSforward, Heartland Neurological Therapy and Wellness Center, and Pediatric Therapy Center who provide our PTA students with opportunities to promote wellness. PTA students are engaging people of all ages and abilities with a wide variety of fun physical activities throughout the fall semester!

Heartland Neurological Therapy and Wellness Center is meeting the needs of the Parkinson's community by offering PD-specific therapy, group exercise classes, and resources. Student volunteers assist participants during classes focused on cardio, strength, power, and dance.

MSforward offers various programs for community members with multiple sclerosis and other neurological conditions. PTA students facilitate a wide variety of exercises, including weights, boxing, tennis, and much more!

Pediatric Therapy Center sponsors an Adaptive Tumbling Camp through the Special Olympics Young Athletes program. Children of all abilities take part in the 6-week camp offered one night per week. PTA students provide one-on-one guidance while teaching and assisting kids with tumbling activities.





Special Olympics

The class of August 2025 participated in the **Special Olympics of Nebraska FunFitness** event to help assess athletes' strength, flexibility, and balance to prepare for upcoming athletic events.



Spring into Wellness 5K Event

The **Student PTA Association** hosted the **5th annual Spring Into Wellness 5k** on April 6th, 2024 at Field Club Trail and had a record-breaking turnout. This event promotes health and wellness while building community relations. Carrie Simonson, SPTA was the first recipient of the annual Abby Olberding Scholarship, awarded by Makovicka Physical Therapy in memory of 2022 PTA graduate, Abby Olberding. The 5K event provides a great opportunity to bring community members and future health care providers together!

Interested in joining next year? Save the date – Saturday, April 5, 2025 at 8am!



Coffee Cart

To celebrate PT Month, the **Student PTA Association** is brewing up a good time for a good cause by hosting a philanthropic Coffee Cart event on **October 25th, 2024**. The event will collect freewill donations, and all proceeds will be donated to the Wings of Hope Breast Cancer

Foundation.

A PTA student shares how impactful this event is: "For me, this event is very special. When I was eight years old my grandma discovered she had stage 4 breast cancer. She miraculously survived which made me cry so joyfully because she was such an important part of my life. Within the last two months, I discovered that my mom had stage 2 breast cancer. Wings of

Hope gave her a care package with hand crafted types of pillows and other amenities that would aid her during her diagnosis and treatment.”

Partnerships

Clarkson College is increasing access to healthcare education by providing tuition savings to employees, spouses, and dependents (up to age 23) of founding and community partners. Learn more on our website: [Partnerships](#)



Proud Partnerships

Clarkson College has formed strong partnerships with industry leaders to boost the health care workforce and give back to the communities we love.

If you are a current employee or a spouse or dependent of an employee at one of the following organizations, you qualify for tuition savings or annual scholarship at Clarkson College worth up to \$5,000 depending upon your student status (full or part-time). Recent Omaha Public Schools graduates or members of the Nebraska Episcopal church are also eligible. Learn more: [ClarksonCollege.edu/Partnerships](#)











Gratitude for our Clinical Partners

We would like to recognize the following PTs and PTAs who served as a **Clinical Instructor** in the Summer and Fall of 2024. Thank you for your service to the profession by providing quality educational experiences in the clinical setting for our future PTAs!

- Suzanne Goshorn, PTA – Myrtue Medical Center

Ashley Castellanos, PT- Advantage Physical Therapy
- Rachel Sorlien, PTA – CRCC

Dorine Nordstrom, PTA – Old Mill Rehabilitation

Stacey Case, PTA – Hillcrest Shadow Lake	Tess Kolbo – Bryan Health
Erica Fry, PTA- Ortho Nebraska Elkhorn	Kevin Almquist, PT - Nannen Physical Therapy
Melissa Schulze, PTA – Witte Physical Therapy	Ross Holsing, PT- CHI Oakland
Emily Johanns - St. Elizabeth's Hospital	Omar Flores, PT- Carp Physio
Tammy Bures, PTA – Methodist Fremont	Willie Stoddard, PTA – Ortho Nebraska Oakview
Mary Maxwell, PT – Heartland Neurological Therapy	Michele Nutsch, PTA – Old Mill Rehabilitation
Lindsey Drake, PTA- Nebraska Medicine	Edwin Mendoza, PTA – Makovicka Bellevue
Adrian Francios, PTA - Nemaha County Hospital	Maggie Johnson, PTA – Keystone Ridge Rehab
Curtis Basnett, PT- Makovicka Waverly	Brian Brunken, PT- Go PT
Shane Cole, PT- Makovicka Plattsmouth	Katie Pongratz, PTA- Columbus PT- Norfolk
Mike Spicka, PT – Makovicka Wahoo	Nathan Buell, PT- Grand Island PT
Colleen Snoza, PT- Ortho Nebraska Oakview	Melissa Stoddard, PTA – Ortho Nebraska Council Bluffs
Brittany Hicks, PTA – Old Mill	Ariana Kilgore, PT – CRCC
Crystal Duryea, PTA – Faith Regional Health Services	Kareena Torres, PTA – Midwest PT
Tasha Dekok, PT - Grand Island Rehab Center	Kayla Romero, PTA- Key Complete Therapies
Matt Weinrich, PTA – Physicians Choice Home Health	

Job Submission

If you are currently seeking a PT/PTA or other health care professionals, Clarkson College welcomes you to submit your job openings to be posted for our students, recent graduates and seasoned alumni.

To submit a job posting, visit the this webpage: [Job Submission](#)



Clarkson College PTA program is a member of the Northern Plains Clinical Education Consortium (NPCEC). This past academic year, the NPCEC began sponsoring the **Outstanding Clinical Educator Award**, celebrating exceptional contributions to physical therapy clinical education and recognizes excellence in teaching, interpersonal skills, and professional competence from their member institutions in Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

NPCEC received 19 nominations this year. Each was nominated by a student within a PT or PTA program that felt his/her Clinical Instructor demonstrated significant dedication and skill in clinical education, making a profound impact on students. Clarkson College PTA program was pleased to have two nominees for this first annual award!

Shaylee Dirks, PTA - St Elizabeth's Sports and Physical Therapy Antelope Creek
Lindsey Drake, PTA - Nebraska Medicine

Learn more about the NPCEC and this award [here](#).

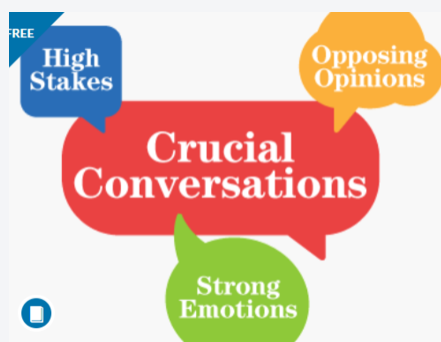


Site Resources Page (Exxat)

Visit our program’s Site Resources Page in Exxat for a variety of helpful resources related to our clinical education program and clinical education.

Click [HERE](#) to access.

CEU Opportunities



Clinical Communication: It's Crucial Thursday, October 24, 6:30PM (Central)

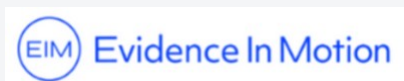
Clarkson College is also hosting a FREE CEU through the NPCEC : Clinical Communication: It's Crucial. This course will consist of one hour of pre-recorded asynchronous content followed by a one-hour synchronous session. [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more or to register.



Institute of Clinical Excellence Course

April 12-13, 2025

In partnership with Makovicka Physical Therapy. More information to come!



EIM Functional Dry Needling- Level 1

Clarkson College hosted 24 participants for this course, held October 11-13, 2024.

Watch for future communications regarding upcoming CEU opportunities!

Profession Updates & Reminders



Are you a PTA looking to advance your skills?

Consider APTA's Advanced Proficiency Pathways (APPs) program!

Click [HERE](#)



APTA Nebraska Events: [Click Here!](#)

PT Pub Night, November 16, 2024 (UNMC Sorrell Center, Omaha)

Sponsored by 2024 Nebraska Student Special Interest Group (NSSIG)

Student Conclave and Early Professionals Special Interest Group (EPSIG)

2025 APTA NE Annual Conference, March 28, 2025 (Younes Center North, Kearney)

Federal/State Legislation

APTA Nebraska Legislative Day- February 4, 2025 (Lincoln, NE)

Contact your chapter representatives or website to see what opportunities are available for you to participate in!

Click [HERE](#) for an update to the legislative bills that APTA is engaged in by leading, endorsing, or working with other groups, related to: Medicare, reducing administrative burden, student loan burden, and other issues impacting the patients PTs and PTAs serve.

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