



VCU College of Health Professions

Search for the Chair of Physical Therapy Virginia Commonwealth University College of Health Professions Richmond, Virginia

THE SEARCH

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) College of Health Professions seeks a visionary leader to be the next Chair of the Department of Physical Therapy (PT). Based in Richmond, Virginia, the next Chair is expected to have a prominent leadership role in shaping the future of our nationally-ranked program. The VCU Department of Physical Therapy has an impressive history of research, teaching, and public engagement, and needs a chair equipped to lead the Department's growth and position the Department for greater national leadership and impact.

VCU, one of the top public urban research universities in the country, has been designated by the Carnegie Foundation as "Community Engaged" with "Very High Research Activity" (R1). The University enrolls nearly 29,000 students across more than 200 programs and enjoys a robust alumni network of over 200,000 graduates. In FY22, VCU conducted more than \$400 million in sponsored research and achieved the status of Minority Serving Institution, having met rigorous standards in the service of minority students, low-income students, and student success. VCU also earned a spot among the nation's "Top 100 Degree Producers" rankings of institutions that confer the most degrees to minority students, according to *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. The University is ranked in the Top 100 National Science Foundation research universities. On its academic medical center campus, VCU has the College of Health Professions (CHP) and four health schools: Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, and Pharmacy. There are countless opportunities for interprofessional education and interdisciplinary research.

In 2019, CHP marked its 50th anniversary with the opening of a state-of-the-art 154,000 square feet, eight-level, LEED Silver-certified building. The Department of PT is one of nine departments in CHP and offers programs leading to the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree and the PhD degree in Rehabilitation and Movement Science in conjunction with the Departments of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (School of Medicine) and Exercise Science (College of Humanities and Sciences). The Department also has three residency programs in Neurological PT, Sports PT, and Pediatric PT. The Department was the first accredited physical therapy program in the Commonwealth of Virginia and one of the first programs in the nation. The Department is home to 175 students, 13 faculty, and 6 staff. The Chair will be responsible for overseeing a nearly \$6 million budget, including almost \$2 million in sponsored research. Major sources of research funding include NIH and the US Department of Defense. The Department of Physical Therapy boasts excellent outcomes for both students and graduates, including a 100 percent graduation rate as well as a licensure examination first-time pass rate of 96.9 percent.

Reporting to the Dean of the College of Health Professions, the next Chair will foster a culture of inclusion, diversity, and equity in one of the top Physical Therapy programs in the country. The Chair will champion innovation at every turn, leading a curricular review to support advancement of the Department's educational activities and ensure bold and relevant training congruent with the needs of the next generation of physical therapists. The Chair will be charged with broadening the reach of the Department, recruiting and retaining a diverse and talented faculty and staff, overseeing residency programs, and engaging with a large and successful alumni base. The Chair will be in a strong position to support faculty scholarship, facilitate collaborations within the CHP and across VCU, and provide new educational, research and clinical opportunities for students, faculty, and staff.

The national search firm, Isaacson, Miller, is assisting with the recruitment of the next Chair of the Department of Physical Therapy at VCU. Applications, nominations, and inquiries can be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

VCU's College of Health Professions, consisting of nine departments and a center, includes *U.S. News and World Report* top-ranked programs with physical therapy and occupational therapy ranked in the top 20, healthcare management and rehabilitation counseling ranked in the top five, and the nurse anesthesia program ranked number one in the nation.

As of Fall 2022, the College's student body included nearly 1,200 individuals, with over 300 undergraduates and more than 800 graduate and certificate students. The College has an accomplished and highly active group of 200-plus faculty and staff who embrace and respect individuals with diverse backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences. The College cultivates transformational research and innovation through collaborative partnerships across the University as well as with external stakeholders. Since 2018, CHP research awards are up 96% and yielded \$5.2 million dollars in new awards in FY22.

The VCU College of Health Professions opened a new, state-of-the-art building in 2019. The [new facility](#) enables students and faculty to collaborate in ways that were previously impossible. The new building has enhanced CHP's ability to offer exceptional interdisciplinary research experiences. Each of the building's floors features formal and informal spaces designed to promote interprofessional education, cutting-edge learning and research laboratories for human simulation, diagnostic technology, rehabilitation and counseling education, and flexible classrooms that facilitate increased student engagement and improve distance learning. The building matches the outstanding caliber of the College's nationally acclaimed academic programs while significantly improving efforts to attract and recruit the best and brightest students and faculty.

The College of Health Professions' leadership team is working collaboratively to create an exceptional workplace for each employee and a culture of interprofessional excellence in research and teaching, commensurate with the resources and co-location of the departments in one new building. In addition,

the leadership team is working in alignment with the University's strategic plan, [Quest 2028](#), which prioritizes diversity driving excellence, student success, research and innovation, and thriving communities.

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

VCU's Department of Physical Therapy has pioneered physical therapy education advances since its inception in 1931. The DPT program ranks among the top 20 programs according to *U.S. News & World Report*. The program was last accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education in 2017 and will be reviewed again in 2028. The Ph.D. program accepts around two students a year, and the Department has three Residency Programs: The VCU Sports Residency Program provides students with on-field experience with VCU Athletics and works closely with physicians at the VCU Sports Medicine Clinic. The Neurological PT Residency Program includes comprehensive training in leading-edge assessment and treatment of individuals with neurologic impairments. Students experience a continuum of care in a variety of settings including Sheltering Arms Rehabilitation Hospital and VCU Health System. The Pediatric PT Residency provides opportunities for the residents to gain experience with a diverse and complex patient population. For the third year in a row, VCU PT students have won the [VCU-Marquette Fundraising Challenge](#) for the Foundation for Physical Therapy Research, raising money to fund scholarships and grants that advance patient care.

VCU's Department of Physical Therapy currently affiliates with approximately 210 clinical sites throughout the United States. The Department offers specialty clinical experience in pediatrics, women's health, cancer rehabilitation, and sports medicine. The Department is closely affiliated with the [Sheltering Arms Institute \(Outpatient\)](#). The 114-bed, inpatient rehabilitation facility works closely with the Neurological PT Residency Program. The [VCU Health Short Pump Pavilion](#) also works alongside the Department of PT as a site for clinical rotations and as a collaborator for the Department's [Motor Development Lab](#). The [Hunter Holmes McGuire Veteran Affairs Medical Center](#) is another important partner for clinical rotations. The Department aids the community through initiatives such as the [CARES Clinic](#), a non-profit, pro bono physical therapy clinic run by student volunteers in VCU's Doctor of Physical Therapy program.

The Department's long history of research excellence includes interdisciplinary collaboration with Occupational Therapy, Engineering, Anatomy, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, and Nursing, among others. Several faculty are active in conducting cutting-edge research in [multiple on-site labs](#) that addresses critical health issues including post-amputation rehabilitation, low back pain evaluation and treatment, and technology to assist mobility and rehabilitation. PT Department researchers helped design the generous lab space that now provides capacity for combining teaching and research. The Department's research strengths include measurement development, applied movement performance, biomechanics, and motor control.

ROLE OF THE CHAIR

The Chair of Physical Therapy will ensure the long-term viability, growth, and quality of the Department's programs. As a member of the College's senior leadership team, the Chair collaborates with the Dean's Office and other department chairs to promote the College's mission and achieve its strategic plan. The Chair will also have an active role in fundraising and external relations. With a track record of success in innovation, the new Chair will shape a nationally-recognized Department, bringing in new faculty and top students, and will lead a curriculum review to ensure the Department remains at the forefront of physical therapy education and research.

Since the Chair serves as a leader, mentor, and colleague of the Department of Physical Therapy, it will be necessary for the Chair to demonstrate highly effective emotional intelligence and leadership capabilities to gain trust, manage relationships, and clearly communicate. The Chair will nurture and strengthen clinical partnerships to ensure each student has exceptional clinical training opportunities.

The Chair will have duties across all three cores - teaching, research, and service. The Chair will partner with the faculty to maintain the quality and currency of the educational programs, promoting student success. As the physical therapy program continues to grow, curriculum development and integration of new topic areas will be essential. The Chair will preferably have a well-developed scholarly research portfolio with evidence of multi-disciplinary applications and/or knowledge of how to support external funding. The Chair will support the Department's programs and functions through effective budget/resource management and planning. In collaboration with the Dean's office, the Chair will maintain a strong development and fundraising program with alumni and the community. In addition, the Chair will have ties to local and national professional organizations. Clinically, the Chair will supervise a thriving residency program, providing administrative oversight.

The Chair will have a history of engaging in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives aimed at increasing the diversity of faculty, staff, students, the clinical workforce, and research participant populations. The Chair will advocate for and champion health equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism action plan projects or programs related to the Department of Physical Therapy.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

To ensure the continued success and forward momentum of the Department of Physical Therapy, the Chair will be expected to address the following key opportunities and challenges:

Create a strategic, distinctive, and unifying vision for the Department of Physical Therapy

The Chair will provide leadership and oversight to organize, support, and advance the mission areas of education and research. After assessing the current state of the Department with an eye on transformative advances in the field, the Chair will partner with the Departmental faculty and staff to

implement a strategic plan that leverages existing areas of strength and aligns with the values and goals of VCU and VCU Health's newly launched strategic plan, [Quest 2028: One VCU Together We Transform](#). The Chair will empower the Department to design and promote objectives in accordance with the University-wide plan, including initiatives around student success; innovative curricula; diversity, equity, and inclusion; recruitment and retention of faculty and staff; providing experiential learning opportunities; and strengthening and deepening key relationships with alumni, clinical partners, and the community.

Recruit, support, and develop a diverse faculty

With several anticipated retirements on the horizon, the Chair will be responsible for recruiting, supporting, and mentoring the next generation of faculty. The Chair will be adept at attracting, recruiting, and retaining those at the cutting edge of discovery to continue to shape the Department's future. The Chair will also be responsible for providing and encouraging mentorship among faculty members and students. The Chair will hold Department members accountable for excellence in education and research and will work to inspire, develop, and guide faculty. Above all else, the Chair will further establish and champion a culture of inclusivity and equity within the Department and maintain a supportive environment where faculty at all stages of their careers have the necessary resources for professional development.

Work to advance a culture of inclusivity and equity for students and faculty in the Department

CHP prioritizes the core value of individual dignity by promoting a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and equity in a supportive learning and work environment. The VCU PT program places great value in having a strong racially and ethnically diverse community of students, faculty, and staff, while being cognizant that meaningful work remains to ensure that the Department similarly reflects the diversity of the local region. Departmental faculty and staff have supported programmatic efforts such as the federally funded Health Careers Opportunity Program, Historically Black College and University (HBCU) recruitment fairs, and engaging with students from the Richmond Public School System via the Physical Therapy Exploration Program. Each of these efforts is designed to recruit and engage students from historically underrepresented and/or excluded backgrounds.

The Chair will refine and advance the Department's diversity action plan, focusing on key areas, including deepening involvement in the Summer Academic Enrichment Program (SAEP). This is an important program that creates a direct pathway for students from historically underrepresented and/or excluded backgrounds while recognizing that a culture of inclusivity and diversity is imperative to meet the Department and College's mission to train effective health care professionals and generate the highest quality scientific research.

Continue to push forward a dynamic and innovative curriculum to prepare students for success as physical therapists

As the field of physical therapy is constantly evolving, the curriculum must continue to reflect the changes in the healthcare environment and interprofessional experiential learning. The current curriculum can be characterized as a traditional, hybrid model with a competitive tuition rate and integrated clinical experiences. The program also relies on a robust and involved alumni cohort accessible for mentorship opportunities. The Chair will work with the faculty in the Department to develop a curriculum that continues to enable each of its graduates be successful in both current and future practice environments. The Chair will work with the Department members to build upon the existing strong reputation of the Department and focus on student success. With over 400 PT students enrolled in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the chair will build and deepen relationships with local health systems to foster robust clinical placements.

Support and expand research capacity

From the [Center for Rehabilitation Science and Engineering](#) to the [LEVR Center](#) for Virtual Reality, PT faculty and students conduct innovative research across a wide spectrum of clinically relevant topics. Faculty expertise and experience are unmatched and many faculty are nationally known. In addition, departmental faculty engage in clinical research and collect data at various clinical sites. The Chair of the Department will recognize the appetite for and the opportunity to build research capacity in labs which have been designed to support it. Each faculty member has a scholarly agenda, and several faculty have been or are federally funded. The Chair will work to support all faculty who seek funding for their research.

Promote a culture of collaboration, communication, trust, and transparency

As an exceptional communicator and listener, the Chair will be skilled at disseminating information across a complex organization by having candid conversations and creating space for the open exchange of ideas. The chair will lead the community in engaging one another authentically. The Chair will ensure that all constituencies are heard, but will balance consultation with timely decision-making, cultivating a culture which respects the diverse perspectives that exist on campus.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Chair will be a leader with dynamic, inclusive, and enterprising style. The Chair will have demonstrated administrative ability, intellectual stature, and vision to integrate and inspire a top-tier physical therapy department. The Chair will also bring a strong dedication and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as a vision for the future of scientific training. This role is a full-time, 12-month faculty position. Salary, tenure, and rank shall be commensurate with candidate qualifications. Candidates must have a terminal degree from an accredited institution and demonstrated expertise in physical therapy.

Additionally, the Chair will be expected to possess most, if not all, the following personal characteristics and professional experiences:

- License-eligibility in physical therapy with a PhD, EdD, or terminal degree from an accredited university in Physical Therapy or closely related discipline is required
- A commitment to fostering excellence in teaching, scholarly achievement, as well as clinical and community service
- A fierce commitment to diversity and inclusion, including a history of success in working with diverse communities and building a diverse faculty, staff, and student body
- Significant evidence of supporting students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds
- A demonstrated record of success to ensure the Department's national reputation for educating physical therapy professionals and researchers
- Understanding of accreditation
- Experience guiding organizational change and growth
- An ability to define and articulate a compelling vision that engages faculty, staff, students, clinical partners, and alumni
- Demonstrated managerial, business, and financial acumen
- An interest in fundraising and outreach
- A strong dedication to collaboration and interprofessional development
- Experience in the recruitment and development of excellent faculty, staff, and students
- An entrepreneurial, creative, innovative, and driven spirit
- Personal commitment to and respect for the profession of physical therapy

THE CITY OF RICHMOND

Richmond is the capital of Virginia and boasts a vibrant cultural community consisting of intimate neighborhoods, cozy restaurants and cafes, quaint local markets, and exceptional healthcare facilities. It has all the familiarity of a small town, but also has theaters, art galleries, museums, music festivals, sports attractions, and a steady stream of annual events. The city offers more than 550 acres of parks bordering the historic and scenic James River, just steps from VCU's campus. Richmond is an outdoor paradise, offering miles of hiking, mountain biking, flatwater kayaking, and the only urban whitewater in the United States. Richmond's ideal location in the middle of the state allows for easy day and weekend trips to the beach, the mountains or Washington, DC. *Travel + Leisure* magazine recently named the Richmond region as one of the five top wine regions to visit. Greater Richmond is home to eight Fortune 500 companies, a broad base of financial organizations, hospitals, media firms, high-tech manufacturing companies, as well as state and local government agencies.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Jamie Sands, Partner,
Katie White, Associate
Ibaad Nazeer, Associate
Isaacson, Miller

<http://www.imsearch.com/8836>

All applications must also be submitted through the [VCU Jobs website](#).

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