
WHAT CAN I DO WITH A MAJOR IN ... PHYSICAL THERAPY

OCCUPATIONAL OVERVIEW:

The [UNM Physical Therapy website \(2013\)](#) states, “Physical Therapy (PT) is a dynamic and rewarding health care profession whose primary purpose is the promotion of optimal health and human performance through the application of sound scientific principles to address the prevention, evaluation, and treatment of acute and chronic movement dysfunction”. Furthermore, “Physical therapists work with individuals of all ages to prevent/minimize the onset, symptoms, and progression of diverse impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities that impact movement. In countless settings, physical therapists enhance physical and functional abilities and promote optimal wellness and fitness in people with a variety of diseases, disorders, conditions, and injuries” ([UNM Physical Therapy website 2013](#)). Additionally, [The Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\) \(2013\)](#) explains, “Physical therapists are trained to use a variety of different techniques, sometimes call modalities, to care for their patients. These techniques include applying heat and cold, hands-on stimulation or massage, and using assistive and adaptive devices and equipment”. Moreover, “the work of physical therapists varies with the type of patients they serve. For example, some physical therapists specialize in one type of care, such as pediatrics (treating children) or sports physical therapy” ([BLS\) \(2013\)](#).

EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

A postgraduate professional degree is the required formal education required for physical therapists ([BLS, 2013](#)). “Physical therapy programs usually award a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree, although a small number award a Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) degree. Doctoral programs typically last 3 years. Most programs require a bachelor’s degree for admission, and many require specific prerequisites, such as anatomy, physiology, biology, and chemistry” ([BLS, 2013](#)). Furthermore, “All states require physical therapists to be licensed. Licensing requirements vary by state but typically include passing the National Physical Therapy Examination or a similar state-administered exam” ([BLS, 2013](#)). Refer to the [American Physical Therapy Association website \(2013\)](#) for further information. Consult [O*Net](#) for more information on the specific KSAs (Knowledge, Skill, Ability) that are required for this career.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO:

The UNM School of Medicine Department of Physical Therapy offers a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. You can find further information on the [UNM Physical Therapy website \(2013\)](#).

INDUSTRIES & TARGET EMPLOYERS:

A variety of employers specifically recruit UNM students and alumni. Consult UNM’s [Lobo Career Connection](#) for a complete list of employers and current job postings. Speak with a Career Development Facilitator at the [UNM Office of Career Services](#) for help with identifying employers or additional resources for your occupation of choice.

Healthcare

Hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers, acute care, neuro-rehab, out-patient, residential treatment centers, assisted living facilities, sports medicine facilities, group or private practices, K-12 school systems

Public Health

Occupational health and safety, community health workers

Education/Research

Research laboratories and institutes, University/college teaching/administration

Management

Administrator, manager, director

Government

National Institutes of Health, Armed Services

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

- Throughout your undergraduate degree, gain volunteer/paid hours of hands on experience/observation by volunteering or working in a healthcare setting where licensed Physical Therapists are employed.
- Shadow physical therapists of interest to gain a better understanding of their occupation and to build relationships with professional mentors.
- Build your network and get involved on campus through student organizations and campus events. Find organizations and events at the [Student Activities Center website](#).

- Attend career related campus events such as career fairs, company information sessions, and or career workshops.
- Students who are interested in physical therapy should maintain a high undergraduate GPA, high “science” GPA, and perform well on the GRE (graduate entrance exam) as well as develop relationships with faculty and community leaders.
- Attend Physical Therapy information sessions (held at the UNM department of Physical Therapy) to acquire information about specific details about the UNM Physical Therapy graduate program.
- Submit your application to graduate school via the PTCAS (Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service) by the appropriate application deadlines.
- Speak with mentors and faculty about career opportunities.
- Job leads can be found on your department’s website, list-serv, newsletters, and social media sites.

STATE AND NATIONAL WAGES:

Adapted from CareerOneStop (2013)

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Location	2012				
	10%	25%	Median	75%	90%
United States	\$55,600	\$67,000	\$79,900	\$92,900	\$112,000
New Mexico	\$56,600	\$69,600	\$82,800	\$93,100	\$107,700

PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS

Location	2012				
	10%	25%	Median	75%	90%
United States	\$32,400	\$42,100	\$52,200	\$62,400	\$72,700
New Mexico	\$26,000	\$29,700	\$40,000	\$47,900	\$57,300

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

American Physical Therapy Association
Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy
The University of New Mexico Physical Therapy Program
New Mexico Regulations and Licensing Department

<http://www.apta.org>
<http://www.fsbpt.org>
<http://hsc.unm.edu/som/physther/>
<http://www.rld.state.nm.us/PhysicalTherapy/index.html>



<http://online.onetcenter.org>



<http://www.bls.gov/oco/>

REFERENCES

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