



PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

PTA PROGRAM – COVID UPDATE

PTA Class of 2020:

The PTA Class of 2020 has been on quite a ride this year! I am still working on securing two more final affiliations for this class. These students have already taken and passed their board exam and are waiting on one final affiliation. The good news is that we are down to two and I am still working fervently on securing their final affiliation.

PTA Class of 2021:

The Class of 2021 has been impacted the greatest. Acceptance letters were sent out one week prior to the college's decision to operate remotely. The curriculum sequence has been completely changed to accommodate for a fully remote summer and fall semester. During the upcoming spring semester, they will complete all of the labs, competency tests, and practical exams that coincide with the lectures that they received this fall. They will have all three clinical education courses back-to-back, starting mid-summer.

PTA Class of 2022:

It turns out that Covid-19 is also going to impact the yet-to-be-admitted Class of 2022. Instead of starting their two summer lab courses in May, they will be starting in July. They will receive grades of "Incomplete" at the end of the summer and will take the practical examination during the first week of the fall 2021 semester. This will allow us to teach the two summer lab courses first to the Class of 2021, immediately followed by the Class of 2022. I thought 2020 was going to be my most tiresome year...that may not be the case!

A PEEK INTO THE LAB

The lab has been set up with four lab stations, all at least 6 feet apart.



ALUMNI CONTRIBUTION!

Grace Freiermuth, PTA, Class of 2020

You would think being in school during a pandemic is cool because all of your classes become online classes. That's not the case with the PTA program. Because we can't make our clinical affiliations into remote learning situations, we all became worried that we wouldn't be able to complete our affiliations, take our board exams, and ultimately, graduate. We soon all found out that our second round of clinicals would not be as expected and our dread for the future of our PTA careers heightened.

Although it took months of working out different affiliation sites, schedules, and start/end dates (thanks Holly!!!), almost everyone finished their affiliations and took their board exams if they planned on taking them this year. Luckily for me, I finished my third rotation before most of my classmates because the pandemic barely altered my schedule. It was a very good thing because I already had put down the holding deposit, first and last month's rent, and security deposit on an apartment across the country, not thinking that the pandemic would extend so long into my plans to move to Colorado.

The stress continued to weigh on my mind though, as myself and my boyfriend were unofficially offered jobs that were officially rescinded two weeks before we were set to pack up the UHaul and move. The hiring manager said they couldn't justify new hires when they had furloughed employees to bring back. So, then we had an apartment in Colorado and no income during an economic recession when the chances of finding an outpatient physical therapy job in two weeks were slim to none. Luckily, my boyfriend landed a home health PT job, a last resort for him, a week before we were slated to move. Because I had 3 weeks before I could apply for my license, and then a week or two to process it, we assumed I would find a job in that month (or so) and I'd be in the workforce quickly. A month was plenty of time to find a job, right? We hopped in the UHaul and ventured across the country.

WE WERE WRONG. In two months, there were only two outpatient jobs to come up for a PTA. I applied and interviewed for both. The first interviewer told me, verbatim, "The first year of working here will absolutely be the worst year of your life". I was offered the job, but sorry man, hard no from me. The second job, thankfully, turned out to be a dream come true. I was offered the job but had to wait another full month before starting, meaning another full month with no income on my part. The only good thing about having three months off was being able to spend my time with my new puppy. But here I am today, happy and employed. Although I couldn't see it in the beginning of this hell we are calling 2020, I'm very grateful to be closing out the year with a fantastic job, a supportive boyfriend, and a new home in the mountains.

PAGE THREE