



PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

PTA PROGRAM – COVID UPDATE

PTA Class of 2020:

As you know, the stay-at-home orders initiated in March threw quite a wrench into everyone's plans! The Scorebuilders course that was scheduled for April was converted into a fully online program. The college closed on March 13th and spring clinicals were scheduled to begin on March 30th. Despite the fact that 100% of our inpatient affiliations cancelled and many of our outpatient affiliations cancelled, all seventeen learners in the Class of 2020 were able to complete their spring clinical affiliations! Four learners "opted out" of participating in the spring clinicals starting on March 30th. Seven were able to begin on time. I was unable to find a spring clinical starting on March 30th for four learners and two were able to go to their assigned facility with a later start date. The four who opted out and the four for whom I was unable to secure a last-minute assignment were all able to start in May (instead of March) and completed their spring clinicals in June.

At this time, two learners have completed their summer clinical, two are in the summer clinical now, and thirteen are waiting for inpatient sites to open their doors to students. I am confident that we will be able to see these learners across the finish line before the end of the year.

PTA Class of 2021:

Instead of spending a day in the PTA lab, meeting each other during orientation, the PTA Class of 2021 experienced a fully online orientation through Blackboard. Because the college implemented a fully remote summer semester, we were unable to conduct labs and competency testing, as usual. The learners took Pathology and Seminar this summer, in a fully online format. This fall will see additional changes. Learners will be receiving the lecture content for four courses, as well as Motor Development...all online. The spring 2021 semester will provide the lab experiences pertaining to those four courses.

Mandatory PTA Program Information Sessions:

The mandatory PTA Program Information Sessions are now fully conducted online! Prospective students watch a video (located on the PTA Program website) and then complete a short questionnaire. They have to answer 8 of the 10 questions correctly to satisfy this requirement.

FACE SHIELDS

Mercer County Community College's Advanced Manufacturing Lab has been producing face shields for months, in response to the covid-19 pandemic. Many of our alumni have received a face shield to be used as an additional measure of protection during this time. The PTA Class of 2020 were able to pick up a face shield in preparation for their final clinical affiliation. The PTA Class of 2021 will each receive a face shield for use during labs and psychomotor assessments.

https://www.mccc.edu/pr/General/2020/COVID_face_shields.html



Debbie LeMay, PTA Class of 2011 (far left)



Nicolette Scorsone, PTA Class of 2018

WELCOME TO OUR NEW ACCE!

Professor Edwin Crane, PT, DPT is excited to join the Mercer County Community College faculty in 2020. He obtained his Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from Arcadia University in 2005 and has been practicing in the outpatient orthopedic setting since. He first started teaching in 2012 for Select Medical and provided numerous continuing education seminars for PT, OT and ATC nationally. He specialized in Concussion Management, Vestibular Rehabilitation, IASTM, Kinesiology Taping, TMJ Dysfunction and Pilates. He has been a guest speaker in the PTA program for the past two years and he is excited to fill the role of Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education.

Ned Crane, PT, DPT, DAC

ALUMNI CONTRIBUTION

Annmarie Fewkes, PTA, Class of 2010

My name is Annmarie Fewkes and I graduated from the PTA program in 2010. I passed my licensing exam that October and began working in a SNF fulltime and transitioned to per diem a year later. Throughout the last 10 years I have tried to give back to the profession while juggling raising my two kids. One thing that had always interested me was to someday contribute to the national licensing exam as an item writer. I had thought about it often, but always talked myself out of applying for the volunteer position because I was “too busy” or I “don’t know enough”.

In February 2020, I received an email from FSBPT that Barbara Behrens had recommended me as someone who may be interested in applying to become an item writer. I read the email over my lunch break and could hardly wait to get home to apply. I knew this was finally the “right time”. My application was accepted and my 4 month term as an item writer was scheduled to begin with the upcoming March workshop! I was excited to get away for a weekend, meet other PTA’s, and learn what it takes to write quality items for the exam.

All item writers attend an item writing workshop in Alexandria, VA and as part of the position, FSBPT covers all the cost of travel, hotel stay, and meal expenses. Item writers are given a textbook stipend to purchase current textbooks to assist in the item writing process. In addition to the textbook stipend, FSBPT provides access to their online library and textbook library as use for references. During the 4 month term you are expected to write a total of 40 questions. During and after the workshop all questions are created in the secure web based system and reviewed by an item writer coordinator. The coordinator is an experienced NPTE volunteer who reviews each question and suggests revisions to ensure all questions meet the high standards required for the NPTE. The FSBPT pays each volunteer a small stipend after the completion of 20 items, 30 items and 40 items.

As the Coronavirus took over NJ and schools closed, I began to get worried about traveling to Virginia and thought my opportunity to become an item writer was passing me by. However, the FSBPT ended up cancelling all in person events the week before the workshop and switched to a virtual workshop. So, while I missed out on meeting PTA’s and PT’s face to face and having a weekend away, I was able to learn so much about writing quality test questions and creating distracting wrong answers. One of the best things that I learned during the workshop was how to clone an item, taking the question and flipping the information for the right answer, so in a sense one question turns into two!

I was able to write about 7 or 8 questions during the workshop and had conversations on the phone, email, and text with my item writer coordinator in addition to the feedback provided in the writing system. It was so helpful to have someone reading over my questions and giving me pointers on how to improve the wording and options. I surprisingly found a lot of enjoyment in reading the textbooks and gathering current information on what is being taught in the classroom. My fears of not knowing enough to make 40 questions turned out to be the exact opposite! Often times when I was creating my questions, I drew from experiences that happened during the first few months when I began working as a PTA and have stuck with me all these years later!

I initially thought this was going to be a huge time commitment, but I found that in a weekend I could write 3-4 questions after the workshop and 1-2 during the week. Each question would take me about an hour to develop and revising took less than 10 minutes. If I could create a question that could be cloned, I had two questions done in that hour! My assignment period ended on July 31, 2020, but I had completed my 40 questions well before that in Mid-June. It felt like such a huge success to say I had completed all 40 questions early and they were in the review stage with the editors!

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ALUMNI CONTRIBUTION CONTINUED

Everyone at FSBPT was extremely helpful and supportive throughout the whole process. This was the first virtual workshop they had ever done and it went pretty smoothly! I enjoyed creating questions that were challenging and applicable to information new grads need to know, but were not impossible. The FSBPT is always looking for volunteers and I found this as a great way to give back to my profession! If you are interested in finding out more about volunteering with the FSBPT check out the volunteer tab on their website- <https://www.fsbpt.org/Secondary-Pages/Volunteers> . If you are interested in finding out more about how test content is developed, here is a link to additional information <https://www.fsbpt.org/Free-Resources/NPTE-Development> (also on the FSBPT website). I hope to have more opportunities to work with FSBPT in the future!

PLEASE HELP, IF YOU CAN!

Now, more than ever, our students are turning to us for help. This is where you can make a real difference. We realize that many of our alumni are facing similar challenges, so we ask you to assist our efforts in any way you can.

For those who have the ability to do so, please support our students with a donation to our MCCC Student Emergency Fund by visiting <http://www.mccc.edu/mercermatters>, or texting **MercerMatters** to **41444**. Every dollar counts – no donation is too small. Truly, even \$1 dollar, will make an impact.

If you are unable to make a donation, kindly pass this message along to anyone who might be willing to help. A simple "share" on your social media can have a large impact on our ability to assist our students. Encourage others to "Support MCCC by making a fast, secure donation via text message! No donation is too small, and your support is greatly appreciated!"