

GIVING

- As Good As One Gets

“Our human responsibility is to help others, which is why many of us chose physical therapy as the means to galvanize people toward a better quality of life.”

– Jemma Lopez



FIU DPT students (L-R): Rachel Hagiel, Jemma Lopez and Rohmoya Baily.

Physical Therapy students flex their volunteer muscles

Optimizing movement to improve the human experience is the guiding principle for physical therapists. These six FIU Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students have optimized their skills to improve the human experience beyond the classroom and define their outlook as practitioners.

Rachel Hagiel and Rohmoya Baily volunteered for the 2017 Special Olympics performing screenings on athletes to assess hamstring flexibility, joint range of motion, standing balance, abdominal strength and more. According to Rachel, their engagement with the special needs population gave them a deeper awareness of inclusivity. “Individuals with special needs shouldn’t be automatically excluded because of assumptions that they might not be able to perform.”

Anna Marzak and Shana Saffer took the reins for volunteer experiences involving hippotherapy – the use of horseback riding as a therapeutic or rehabilitative treatment. A horse owner herself, Anna spent time with HOPE (Horses Helping People), which provides equestrian therapies for children and adults with special needs, veterans and first responders. She assisted clients dealing with neurological, visual, auditory, motor, sensory, and cognitive deficits. “The experience helped me better understand what it takes to serve people of all age groups with unique backgrounds and diagnoses.”

Shana’s semester with GREAT! (Gainesville Riding through Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapy) elevated her appreciation of the

practice and for alternative ways a patient can receive therapy outside a gym setting. “It’s one thing to read about a diagnosis, treatment, and anticipated outcomes in a textbook. But to see a treatment approach, especially an unconventional one such as hippotherapy, have such a profound impact and improve the quality of life for an individual – that’s truly awe-inspiring.”

Kristie Serrano, a “habitual volunteer,” recently gave her time and talents to Camp Shriver, an adult fitness camp for athletes with intellectual disabilities. She facilitated different sports and leisure activities such as relay races, swimming and weight lifting for the campers. The experience enhanced her skills at keeping patients engaged and motivated, which is crucial to physical therapy activities.

Jemma Lopez and her husband have volunteered at the Homestead Food Pantry since 2005 preparing food care packages for more than 500 migrant worker families. “Seeing first-hand that hardship does not discriminate has transformed me as a person and practitioner. By understanding the challenges that exist – whether physical, financial or emotional – I can be more sensitive to their needs and carry that perspective into practice to help them overcome their frustrations and reach their goal.”

Jemma summed up all the FIU DPT volunteer experiences best. “Our human responsibility is to help others, which is why many of us chose physical therapy as the means to galvanize people toward a better quality of life.”

INSIDE PHYSICAL THERAPY

Chair: Mark D. Rossi, PhD, PT, CSCS

Program(s): Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)

Student Enrollment (in and out of state): 173

Number of Graduates: 51

Graduation Rate: 91%

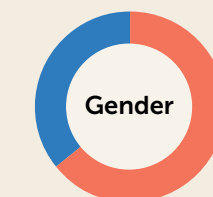
First-Time Licensure Pass Rate: 89%

Ultimate Licensure Pass Rate: 98%

Full-Time Faculty: 10

Accreditation(s): Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE)

Student Body Diversity:



64% Female
36% Male



44% Hispanic
8% Black Non-Hispanic
36% White Non-Hispanic
10% Asian/Pacific Islander
2% Other

