

## Proposal of Quality Initiative Template

(Due date: 9/30/2022)

(Page limit: 2-4 pages, 12pt font)

Quality Initiative Proposal: A brief summary.

During the last three admissions cycles, 2019-2020, 2020-21, and 2021-22, there has been an alarming trend in DPT attrition. In prior years, in 2017-18 and 2018-19, our attrition rates were below 10%, 9.5%, and 7.5%, respectively. However, during and following the pandemic, there has been a marked increase in attrition rates in the last 2 cohorts, and we are already seeing a drop in retention in the newest cohort from the 2021-22 admission cycle. The rates are as follows: 14.2% in 2020, 27% in 2021, and following completion of the first course, 7 students have already left the program due to academic deficiency, an attrition rate of almost 18%.

Cohort entry date	Graduating Class Year	Beginning number in cohort	Number of graduates/current enrolled from cohort	Attrition rate	Reasons for attrition**
May 2018	2021	42 (including 2 from Class of 2020)	38	9.5%	Academic deficiency
May 2019	2022	40	37	7.5%	Academic deficiency, financial (1)
May 2020	2023	42	36	14.2%	Academic deficiency
May 2021	2024	44 (including 2 from Class of 2023)	32	27%	Academic deficiency, financial (2), health (1)
May 2022	2025	39 (including 1 from Class of 2024)	32*	17.9%	Academic deficiency (7) at the end of Gross Anatomy*

It is noted that the first summer semester, the first fall semester, and the end of the first spring semester are the periods when most students fail to meet progression criteria, which during the first summer semester means passing Anatomy. Subsequent progression criteria include at least a 2.3 after the two summer semesters, without a course failure. In the fall, the students are tasked with passing all courses to progress, and the first spring semester requires that all students who have been on academic probation (GPA < 3.0) must reach a GPA of 3.0 or above or face dismissal. The greatest attrition seems to align with the semester that correlates with the first semester in a graduate program. The majority of students are met with the intense rigor of a six-week Gross Anatomy course, where the course meets daily for at least 4 to 6 hours each day for 6 weeks. Following 2 six-week summer courses, each one 6 weeks in length, students enter the first fall semester and take a full course load of 15 credits, consisting of 7 different courses. One can speculate that these transitional periods cause students the greatest difficulty in managing this intense new level of learning, and once students face academic probation (GPA less than 3.0) for 2-3 semesters, it can be difficult to meet the minimum criteria to progress beyond the spring of the first year.

Many students are coming from undergraduate institutions that have programmatic advisors, peer tutoring, and other types of academic resources and support. The programs at the graduate level, here at New York Tech, do not have the same resources available to support struggling students. Students may go to seek assistance from program advisors or course instructors, but many are wary and concerned that they will be perceived as inept or otherwise unable to keep up with the work. This proposal is to request funding for a peer-tutoring program designed to help decrease attrition in the DPT program during the semesters when students tend to be dismissed, most often due to academic deficiencies.

## Proposal of Quality Initiative Template

Name of School (College, Division, or Office) \_School of Health Professions

Name of the Unit (Department, Divisions or Office) \_Program in Physical Therapy

Name of the lead personnel for the proposal \_Cheryl A. Hall, PT, DHSc, MBA, Program Chair

---

**1. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative and its relevance and significance for the department, division...etc., and the institution**

The purpose of this initiative is to develop a peer-tutoring program in order to decrease attrition rates in the DPT program. Retention rates are a very important program quality indicator by the program's accrediting body, Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), so this is an important proposal to ensure that we are able to meet accreditation standards. In addition, increased attrition has significant implications on revenue generated from lost tuition dollars. Although graduation rates at Tech are comparable to most CAPTE-accredited programs, attrition rates are not reported. However, the focus on this outcome for our program is based on internal comparisons over the last several years.

Kovel (2021) cites the benefits of peer tutors as follows:

- Students often perceive peer tutors as less threatening where students can vent and seek advice
- They can serve as role models to where the student will be "one day"
- There are motivational benefits, such as decreased test anxiety and higher student engagement
- Eliminates the stigma of asking for help, and
- Peer tutors can help their students become better learners and learn important classroom and life skills.

The benefits also include improving student success in a "low-cost, high impact" manner while capitalizing on peer influence to increase student engagement (Markowitz, 2020).

**2. Describe how the department set up the baseline (if possible) and expected outcomes, evaluate progress, make adjustments and determine its effectiveness.**

The department has set up a 3-year action plan to "Decrease program attrition to an average of less than 10% over the next three years." Although the program is required to report retention rates (which exceed 95% over the last 5+ years), the fall-to-fall semester rates do not capture the loss of students during the first summer semester and typically, the number of students dismissed in the fall and spring is less, overall. "10%" was chosen as our benchmark because CAPTE permits over-enrollment of 10%, which could result in a maximum of 44 students in a cohort after admission. A loss of 10% would still keep class enrollment at the allowable capacity, which seems to align with what CAPTE would consider an acceptable dropout or attrition rate in an overenrolled cohort.

In order to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the program, exam grades will be reviewed, student surveys will be conducted (quantitative data, including details about usage of service), and students will be asked to complete post-course evaluations of the program, similar

## Proposal of Quality Initiative Template

to that of a faculty course evaluation format, using a 5-point Likert scale and opportunities for comments for qualitative data collection.

### **3. Describe the primary activities of the initiative and timeline for implementing them (when and what)**

Faculty will identify courses that would require availability of peer tutors. Physical Therapy Practice I will be one of the courses on target for tutoring. The primary course instructor will work with the program chair to recruit 1 or 2 tutors from the third-year cohort (graduating class, Cycles A, B and C; students are in full-time clinical rotations during Cycles B and C) for this course. Other fall courses will be considered as well, based on historical grade data and course failure. Recruitment of tutors will take place in August 2022 with the target of having them ready to begin by the week of September 26, 2022. Course faculty will work with tutors, providing them a list of their roles responsibilities, including required number of hours/week, instructional materials, and instructor-tutor meeting times outside of tutoring sessions. Course instructor, with input from chair and program faculty, will develop criteria for mandatory student attendance at tutoring sessions. Although the 2025 cohort has already lost 7 students, we hope to prevent further attrition in the fall 2022 and spring 2023 semesters. To date, there are 3 students who are below the 3.0 GPA minimum in the 2025 cohort (2 at 2.3 and 1 at 2.0) and are at risk of not meeting the minimal GPA by the end of the spring semester, as many students who have GPAs this low have difficulty attaining a 3.0 as required. So, we are concerned about delaying the implementation of the peer tutoring program. Students will complete end-of-semester surveys and evaluations. Historical course data (course grades, attrition) will be reviewed. Tutors will also be asked to provide feedback on their experience in the program (areas of success, to be improved, etc.).

### **4. Describe the level of support for the initiative by internal (commitment of leadership, people, and groups), and (or) external stakeholders from other department and divisions.**

Program faculty would be responsible for tracking and identifying the “at-risk students” required to participate. However, students who are not “at-risk” are also free to participate in the program as well. We would also encourage all DPT students to participate in the program. Program faculty will discuss if student participation should be mandatory and if so, develop specific criteria that would require student participation in tutoring sessions. This initiative has been discussed with the Office of the Dean of SHP as a pilot program and, if successful, it can be expanded to include other programs in SHP. Attrition results in tremendous monetary loss for institution, so in order to preserve/increase the revenues generated from SHP tuition, lowering student attrition will support an improved bottom line.

### **5. List the *human*, financial and other resources that the initiative need. \$\$\$**

Our plan is to hire third-year students (who are in their full-time clinical rotations) for an additional 4 hours per week (paid work) to conduct in person extra help sessions on weekends or before an exam. The department will recruit a pool of students who can provide tutoring services to students in courses each semester. All tutors would be screened by primary course instructors to ensure competency in supportive instruction and would be able to withdraw from

## Proposal of Quality Initiative Template

their duties at any time should they be unable to continue. Our students' success is dependent on their ability to progress through the curriculum, including didactic and clinical work. Tutoring other students also provides the benefit of reinforcing material learned earlier in the program, which is beneficial as the students begin preparation for the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE or "The Boards"). We employed this strategy in spring 2022 for our first-year class, where third-year students, expressed interest and were then selected by faculty. They were paid for 4 hours per week, usually on the weekend, to conduct virtual or in-person review sessions for students. Attendance was voluntary. The results of this smaller scale initiative were very positive in that, although two students were dismissed after having performed poorly during the fall and spring semesters, all other students remained at a 3.0 or higher, including 9 students who were removed from academic probation at the end of fall 2021.

Semester	# weeks	# tutors	# hours/week (x .5 per tutor)	Rate per hour	Total
Summer 1	6	2	4	\$15.00	\$360.00
Summer 2	6	2	4	\$15.00	\$360.00
Fall	15	2	8	\$15.00	\$1800.00
Spring	12	2	8	\$15.00	\$1440.00
					\$3960.00

Financial support of \$1800.00 per fall and \$1440.00 spring semester, ensuring 8 hours of tutoring a week (4 hours per tutor) for 15 weeks at \$15.00 per hour. Two summer classes (6 weeks each) 12 weeks x 4 hours (2 hours per tutor) a week at \$15.00 per hour= \$720.00 for a total of \$3960.00 per academic year. The number of students can vary based on availability, but hours/week will be fixed, and if necessary, modified next year, based on results.

### References

Kovel, D. (2021, March 24). The benefits of peer tutoring and how to develop an effective program.

*Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved July 7, 2022, from

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/03/24/benefits-peer-tutoring-and-how-develop-effective-program-opinion>

Markowitz, T. (2020, July 10). The Power Of Peers In Higher Education. *Forbes*. Retrieved July 9, 2022, from

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/troymarkowitz/2020/07/09/the-power-of-peers-in-higher-education/?sh=4390f4b8313c>