

# Physical Therapist Assistant – Program Assessment Story

## **Degree Programs Affected:**

- Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Physical Therapist Assistant
- Dual AAS degree in Physical Therapist Assistant and Health Fitness Specialist
- Dual AAS/ABS degree in Physical Therapist Assistant and General Management

The Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). Additionally, graduates of all three degree programs listed above have to take the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE-PTA) upon graduation in order to get licensed and be employed. The program tracks graduate pass rates on the NPTE-PTA and reports these statistics.

Each year, the program has students in their final semester take a retired NPTE called the Practice Examination Assessment Tool (PEAT). After all students have completed this exam, a report is generated that breaks down student performance by Content Areas and by Systems. For reference, a scale score of 600 is considered passing on the NPTE-PTA.

## **2016 systems data from the PEAT:**

	Target Percentage and Number of Items in Each Area of the Test Content Outline		Retired NPTE Form Test Takers from Your Program	
	% of Exam	# Items in Each System	Mean Scale Score	Confidence Interval of the Mean
Systems				
Cardiovascular/Pulmonary & Lymphatic Systems	16.7%	25	601.2	26.1
Musculoskeletal System	26.0%	39	647.1	23.4
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	22.0%	33	604.4	19.7
Other Systems	14.7%	22	593.6	22.4

## **2017 systems data from the PEAT:**

	Target Percentage and Number of Items in Each Area of the Test Content Outline		Retired NPTE Form Test Takers from Your Program	
	% of Exam	# Items in Each System	Mean Scale Score	Confidence Interval of the Mean
Systems				
Cardiovascular/ Pulmonary & Lymphatic Systems	16.7%	25	587.2	24.5
Musculoskeletal System	26.0%	39	621.3	20.1
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	22.0%	33	618.0	23.5
Other Systems	14.7%	22	632.1	21.8

**Assessment/Interpretation of this PEAT data:** The program faculty meet each year to look at the PEAT data and discuss any necessary program improvements/curriculum changes. With the goal being to have a scale score above 600 in each area, the program faculty decided to make a change to the cardiovascular/pulmonary content in the curriculum since this content area was below 600 two years in a row.

Up until this point, there was one pathology course that covered all the body systems. This course always felt very rushed, and the faculty determined that the cardiovascular/pulmonary content suffered because of this. Using the PEAT data as the catalyst for change, the faculty decided to split the pathology class into two semesters and add a credit to this content to allow more time with the cardiovascular/pulmonary content. Additionally, with input from the program advisory board, a new course was added to the degree programs (LWT 251: Exercise Physiology). This course also has a significant cardiovascular/pulmonary component to it.

**2018 systems data from the PEAT (this cohort had the single pathology course):**

	Target Percentage and Number of Items in Each Area of the Test Content Outline		Retired NPTE Form Test Takers from Your Program	
	% of Exam	# Items in Each System	Mean Scale Score	Confidence Interval of the Mean
Systems				
Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Systems	16.0%	24	561.9	23.1
Musculoskeletal System	26.0%	39	608.7	18.7
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	20.7%	31	617.5	19.4
Integumentary & Lymphatic Systems	6.7%	10	620.0	31.8
Other Systems	10.7%	16	614.2	19.7

**2019 systems data from the PEAT (this cohort had the split pathology course with extra time spent on cardio/pulmonary):**

	Target Percentage and Number of Items in Each Area of the Test Content Outline		Retired NPTE Form Test Takers from Your Program	
	% of Exam	# Items in Each System	Mean Scale Score	Confidence Interval of the Mean
Systems				
Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Systems	16.0%	24	634.3	23.0
Musculoskeletal System	26.0%	39	672.4	23.3
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	20.7%	31	670.2	31.2
Integumentary & Lymphatic Systems	6.7%	10	691.4	50.1
Other Systems	10.7%	16	714.9	30.3

**Assessment/Interpretation of this PEAT data:** Success! The program faculty were thrilled that the cardiopulmonary content score went up significantly compared to previous years. However, was this a one-time occurrence? More data was needed to be sure. Additionally, the program faculty have a goal for their mean scale score on the NPTE-PTA to be above the national average (that is a whole different assessment story).

**2020 systems data from the PEAT:**

	Target Percentage and Number of Items in Each Area of the Test Content Outline		Retired NPTE Form Test Takers from Your Program	
	% of Exam	# Items in Each System	Mean Scale Score	Confidence Interval of the Mean
Systems				
Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Systems	16.0%	24	635.9	25.9
Musculoskeletal System	26.0%	39	644.9	22.3
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	20.7%	31	644.6	24.3
Integumentary & Lymphatic Systems	7.3%	11	625.7	27.5
Other Systems	10.7%	16	631.3	25.5

**2021 systems data from the PEAT:**

	Target Percentage and Number of Items in Each Area of the Test Content Outline		Retired NPTE Form Test Takers from Your Program	
	% of Exam	# Items in Each System	Mean Scale Score	Confidence Interval of the Mean
Systems				
Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Systems	16.0%	24	611.2	24.8
Musculoskeletal System	26.0%	39	637.3	16.7
Neuromuscular & Nervous Systems	20.7%	31	613.0	24.5
Integumentary & Lymphatic Systems	7.3%	11	515.9	27.4
Other Systems	10.7%	16	653.2	33.2

### **Summary/Conclusion:**

The data (mean scale score) for this system continues to be higher than it was prior to the curriculum revision. The program faculty are confident that the curriculum change made a positive difference and will continue with the two pathology courses and exercise physiology requirements. The small dip in scores from the 2021 cohort might be explained by them having to do over half their program in the COVID pandemic.

PEAT scores (content areas and systems) will be assessed annually in addition to pass rates and comparison of Delta College scores to the national average on the NPTE-PTA. If or when there are dips in any areas, we will monitor to see if this becomes a pattern and then look to make changes like we did to improve the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems content.