

PT Department Strategic Plan – 2026 to 2030

Summary

Purpose

The 2026–2030 Physical Therapy Department Strategic Plan provides a focused, outcomes-driven roadmap to advance student success, scholarly impact, inclusive excellence, and operational accountability across Residential and Hybrid programs.

Strategic Context

The plan is fully aligned with the department’s mission to educate ethical, evidence-driven physical therapists and its vision to shape the future of physical therapy through academic excellence, scientific advancement, and innovative, high-value care. It responds to institutional priorities, and evolving workforce and educational models.

This strategic plan was developed based on the main pillars of the University of Pittsburgh’s strategic plan, the “Plan for Pitt 2028.” The Plan for Pitt followed robust community and shared governance engagement and defined each of the plan’s pillars in terms of real actions the University will take. To that end, this Strategic Plan defines the real actions the PT Department will take from 2026 to 2030.

Strategic Pillars & Priorities

Pillar 1: Cultivate Student Success

Strengthens the full student lifecycle—from recruitment through graduation and licensure—by expanding enrollment pathways, improving accessibility, supporting progression and retention, enhancing advising and support services, and ensuring consistent, high-quality academic programming across formats.

Pillar 2: Scholarship, Creativity & Innovation

Advances the department’s research mission by increasing scholarly productivity, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, accelerating dissemination and implementation research, and increasing recognition of faculty and staff excellence.

Pillar 3: Welcoming & Engaged

Builds an inclusive, representative, and engaged learning and working environment through intentional recruitment, sustained community partnerships, DEI-focused mentoring, and support for faculty and staff retention.

Pillar 4: Accountability & Trust

Ensures transparent, efficient, and safe operations through clear governance, modernized systems, standardized instructional platforms, and proactive safety planning.

Pillar 1: Cultivate Student Success

1.1 Integrated Enrollment and Pathways

Goal

Establish a coordinated enrollment ecosystem that expands pathways into all PT programs and ensures a strong pipeline of qualified students.

Strategies

- Build articulation agreements and early-assurance pathways.
 - Expand peer mentoring, ambassador roles, and pipeline engagement.
 - Leverage clinical partners as recruitment hubs.
 - Strengthen marketing, incentives, and scholarship visibility.
 - Integrate flexible curricular options (e.g., non-credit certificates).
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1.2 Improve Accessibility

Goal

Ensure equitable access to learning materials across all courses and formats.

Strategies

- Ensure course materials are accessible in multiple formats.
 - Add accessibility questions to OMETs to monitor student experience.
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1.3 Student Progression, Retention & Support

Goal

Strengthen early identification, progression standards, and comprehensive academic/personal supports to improve student success across all formats.

Strategies

Progression and Retention

1. Implement early identification using performance/predictive indicators.
2. Establish and communicate clear progression/continuation criteria.
3. Convene cross-faculty case reviews to monitor/support at-risk students.
4. Standardize referral to advising, tutoring, coaching, academic and Clinical Education supports.

*Scope: Proactive early alerts → standardized referral → timely, high-quality services → documented outcomes → continuous improvement. *

Service Quality

1. Strengthen advising guidelines and expectations; monitor compliance.
2. Expand tutoring capacity and implement tutor training/competency checks.
3. Strengthen coaching and academic supports.
4. Enhance supports during Clinical Education (site-based check-ins, remediation pathways).

1.4 Ensure Excellence in Preparation and Academic Programming

Goal

Deliver high-quality, standardized education across Hybrid and Residential programs.

Strategies

1. Curriculum Review: Align curricula across formats and ensure consistent assessment tools.
2. Student Performance Analysis: Compare program performance to identify strengths and improvements.
3. Assessment Standardization: Implement shared test banks, rubrics, and practical exam standards.
4. Monitor Licensure Outcomes: Use NPTE-FF and NPTE performance data to drive curricular improvement.

Pillar 2: Scholarship, Creativity & Innovation

2.1 Increase Research Productivity and Impact

Goal

Strengthen research productivity, capacity, and impact by enhancing mentorship, expanding funding readiness, and cultivating a collaborative research culture.

Strategies

- Build structured peer-mentoring and expand research training for PhD students.
- Support the progression of scholarly work (abstract → publication).
- Develop individual faculty research plans; align workload expectations.
- Conduct research retreats; engage SoTL committees; use newsletters to support dissemination.

2.2 Elevate Multi- and Interdisciplinary Discovery and Collaboration

Goal

Advance interdisciplinary research and educational collaboration through partnerships, joint appointments, and team-science initiatives.

Strategies

- Lead multidisciplinary grant applications.
- Support INSPIRE workshops and other interdisciplinary development activities.
- Leverage research communications to highlight interdisciplinary work.
- Expand joint faculty appointments across SHRS and other schools.
- Promote interdisciplinary teaching and IPE through shared lectures and simulations.

2.3 Promote Innovation in Dissemination and Implementation Research

Goal

Advance innovation in translating, implementing, and disseminating clinical and educational research.

Strategies

- Partner with adjuncts and clinical instructors to identify practice needs and technological solutions.
 - Work with UPMC to overcome barriers to joint innovation.
 - Collaborate with Bioengineering, RST, and HI to accelerate technology-enabled research.
 - Build corporate partnerships to strengthen innovation and funding.
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2.4 Increase Distinguished Faculty and Staff Awards

Goal

Increase recognition of faculty and staff excellence in teaching, service, scholarship, and leadership.

Strategies

- Establish a structured awards committee to identify and nominate worthy candidates.
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Pillar 3: Welcoming & Engaged

3.1 Foster Diversity, Representation & Community Engagement

Goal

Increase representation among students, faculty, and staff, and strengthen meaningful engagement with the communities we serve.

Strategies

- Implement inclusive recruitment and marketing practices for students, faculty, and staff.
- Prioritize recruitment in regions aligned with clinical partner networks.

- Expand clinical placements in underserved settings (e.g., Bureau of Prisons, IHS).
 - Strengthen and grow community partnerships, including in Hybrid regions.
 - Support long-term, sustained community involvement initiatives.
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3.2 Build an Inclusive and Supportive Learning & Working Culture

Goal

Create an inclusive, accessible, and supportive environment that promotes academic and professional success.

Strategies

- Implement annual DEI expectations and development requirements for faculty and staff.
 - Expand identity-aligned alumni and peer mentorship programs.
 - Support student-led DEI organizations and structured cross-cohort engagement.
 - Ensure courses incorporate diversity-relevant and culturally responsive content.
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3.3 Support and Retain Outstanding Faculty and Staff

Goal

Enhance faculty and staff satisfaction, professional development, and retention.

Strategies

- Provide structured mentoring, onboarding, and ongoing professional development opportunities.
 - Maintain competitive compensation and a strong, collaborative departmental culture.
 - Improve access and responsiveness of faculty/staff mentorship resources.
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Pillar 4: Accountability & Trust

Reliable, transparent operations are foundational to student success, faculty satisfaction, and institutional trust.

Goal

To promote transparency, operational efficiency, safety, and trust through clear communication and modernized systems.

Strategies

- Provide regular budget updates and purchasing guidance.
- Clarify governance structures, communication processes, and reporting lines.
- Develop centralized digital resources (e.g., process libraries, video libraries).
- Standardize content and its dissemination across programs.
- Review emergency procedures annually; conduct required drills.
- Regular update of equipment.
- Designate a safety lead.