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The Leadership Edge at The University of Central Arkansas Physical Therapy Program

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13 DEC 15

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The Leadership Edge at The University of Central Arkansas Physical Therapy Program

The Leadership Edge at The University of Central Arkansas Physical Therapy Program: Preparing PT Students for Our Real Customers ... Employers of Physical Therapists

Jim Hoyme with Dr. Nancy Reese, Chair, University of Central Arkansas Physical Therapy Program

Leadership.

Most people think of this skill as one reserved for the people at the top of the org chart – for those *'in charge'*. *"We don't have time to spend on leadership education . . . we must focus on teaching our students how to evaluate, diagnose, and treat patients. Our graduates are not going to be managers or practice owners right away anyway."*

Teamwork.

Many view this term as *'mostly for athletes'*. *"Teamwork? Sure we need it in PT School, but students understand this well enough. And besides . . . they will learn about it from the people they work for when they get out of school."*

Not good enough.

Change Requires Leaders at All Levels.

While learning and developing clinical skills is the foundation of physical therapy education, we need a stronger emphasis on formal leadership and teamwork learning experiences in physical therapy school starting on Day 1! So why are Leadership and Team Building skills so important to develop from the very beginning of a physical therapist's professional career? In a word . . . CHANGE.

To quote two outstanding leadership experts, Jack Welch and John Kotter:

"If the rate of change on the outside exceeds the rate of change on the inside . . . the end is in sight." Jack Welch, former GE CEO and one of the most respected business leaders of our time.

"Leadership is tightly related to change. As the rate of change around you accelerates, the need for leadership at all levels of an organization increases."

John Kotter, PhD, Professor Harvard Business School and author of numerous change leadership books.

And let's face it. We are going through a tsunami of change in health care. Physical therapists in ALL practice settings face the challenges associated with *consolidation, changing reimbursement models, a need for new care delivery models, collaboration with other providers, and demands of financial risk sharing*. Our profession needs leaders and high performing teams to adapt to those changes and create innovative strategies that add value to purchasers of health care.

As time goes on, the MOST VALUABLE physical therapists – the ones who get the best outcomes, produce the most, deliver innovative solutions – are those who are confident, proactive leaders and positive, engaged team players.

And guess what . . . it's not just about the 'Big L' Leaders who direct the practices. Clinic teams need leaders at ALL levels. '**Big L' Leaders** who provide vision and direction; '**Leader-Managers**' who build teams, plan, and hold people accountable; and '**Small L' Leaders** who are role models, are great team players, and achieve excellent outcomes. Physical therapists don't need a title to be a valuable leader. Ask author Mark Sanborn. He wrote the book [You Don't Need a Title to Be a Leader](#).

Leadership Development Starts In PT School.

Those of us who hire and work side by side with physical therapy are the primary customers of physical therapy schools, and we need physical therapists who can immediately contribute to our practices as *Self Starter Followers*, *Small L Leaders*, and *awesome team players*. We need new grad physical therapists who have learned to lead as a student . . . like Matt Stoltman from the University of Minnesota, who shares his story in this 5' video:

<http://bit.ly/MGStoltLead>

and another former U of M DPT student, Maggie Bryant, DPT, who is now in the USC orthopedic residency program in Los Angeles. She is a fantastic leader who shares her Top 10 ways to have a Successful Internship. And, by the way . . . her 'Top 10' should be applied through your entire career.

<http://bit.ly/MaggieBTop10>

Therapy practice owners and managers are desperately looking for young physical therapist leaders like Maggie and Matt.

So what are we asking physical school leaders to do? Take Action. Seek to meet the needs of their customers. Implement leadership and team development in all physical therapy education programs.

Therapy Partners' Leadership Edge Program.

Over the last 8 years, TPI has developed and refined a comprehensive leadership program we call The Leadership Edge. The 'Edge' is developing leaders at and for ALL levels of a practice. Our guiding philosophy is that leaders at all levels will deliver success to a physical therapy practice as a quality care provider and as a business. Additionally, it will help each physical therapist engage and grow as a professional clinician, leader, and team player. We provide The Leadership Edge program across TPI practices, for other organizations, and for physical therapy schools.

There are 4 key components of the program:

- 1) StrengthsFinder Assessment. *Understand and develop your own strengths and respect those of your teammates.*
- 2) Followership. *While being respectful of the organization's Big L Leaders, become a positive, self confident, engaged, and proactive contributor to the team.*
- 3) Emphasis is on developing as a role model Small L leader who is a role model in the clinic and on the team; a physical therapist who achieves great results. *We use the 4R Model of Leadership – Relationships, Roles, Responsibilities, and Results of a Leader.*
- 4) High Performance Team. *Develop the 7 traits of a high performance team CULTURE – Shared Purpose, Involvement, Commitment, Trust, Communication, Process Efficiencies, and Continuous Improvement.*



The program starts with a practical overview of health care reform – its challenges and opportunities; the '*commodity syndrome*' that physical therapists face and must overcome; and the challenges and realities of leading change.

Students learn how to integrate and apply their strengths, followership, leadership, and team skills to confidently and positively engage with their classmates, faculty, and community while in school and to carry those skills into their professional career.

You can learn more about the program through . . . <http://bit.ly/LeadershipEDGE>

UCA Physical Therapy Emphasizes Leadership.

Dr. Nancy Reese, Chair of The University of Central Arkansas (UCA) Physical Therapy Program, is a visionary, strategic-thinking education leader who has a passion for the need for developing leaders in her program. She sees the big picture of physical therapy within a larger health care system. She understands we need leaders during time of change.

Back in 2008, Dr. Reese asked me if I would develop a leadership program for her 3rd year students. I agreed and since that time, we have provided a leadership program each year at the UCA Physical Therapy School (@UCAPT on Twitter). Over the years we have made numerous changes in the program, and, based on feedback from students and observations by faculty, UCA students are more engaged, proactive, and energized.

According to Dr. Reese, "At the University of Central Arkansas, we have been looking for ways to increase student engagement and leadership skills to provide them with the personal resources they will need to be successful in a changing healthcare environment. We've provided students with leadership training in the third year of the program for many years, but felt we were waiting until too late in the curriculum for students to use and develop leadership skills during their education. In 2015, we decided to train our first year students using The Leadership Edge in their first week on campus and the results have been phenomenal!"

"Students repeatedly rave about The Leadership Edge program. Their level of engagement has been high from the beginning, including their enthusiasm for getting involved professionally. The first year students report their class developed an almost instant cohesiveness based on their experience with The Leadership Edge program. Students support and encourage each other. They are also engaged in the Pittsburgh – Marquette challenge for the first time in UCA history, and are incredibly enthusiastic and energized about the profession."

Dr. Reese further stated, “Dr. Darla Cathcart, one of our faculty members who has strongly supported UCA’s leadership program and has been very involved with student activities such as National Student Conclave, Arkansas Physical Therapy Association, and community outreach, reports that 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year students are much more proactive and engaged in these activities in ways consistent with the leadership program. She feels the 1st year students are especially confident, proactive, and more engaged than any other class she has had – in class and in extra-curricular opportunities. She feels that providing the StrengthsFinder, Followership, and High Performance Team components of the leadership program in their first week of school energizes the students and gives them confidence to be self starters.

Dr. Reese continued, “We also have received positive feedback from UCA 1st Year students. Jaden Hoth, a 1st year student and member of UCA’s Student Advisory Council, said *‘Having the Leadership Edge orientation for the first two days of Physical Therapy School was the perfect way to start classes. I learned that the Leadership “Edge” is a foundation upon which to build a bright and successful future. It was inspiring.’* Jade Pearl, also a 1st year student, shared with me, *‘The Leadership Edge program was truly an amazing and beneficial experience. Not only did it help me get to know myself better, but it also brought our entire class closer together as a team. I now see that being a leader is something that starts immediately in school and not after graduation. I learned I need to actively be a leader and work to develop meaningful relationships throughout my entire time in physical therapy school.’*

Dr. Reese concludes, “We will definitely provide The Leadership Edge program with our first year students from now on because we see the value of instilling leadership principles from day one of the student’s learning and developing experience. We will also engage faculty leadership to ensure leadership growth continues throughout UCA’s educational program.”

Through Dr. Reese’s *‘Big L Leadership’* and the support of her faculty members like Dr. Cathcart, UCA Physical Therapy is a role model in physical therapy leadership education. By providing and supporting leadership development and team efforts throughout the entire program, UCA will produce more well-rounded physical therapist leaders who will contribute immediately to the success of their practices.

Keep Learning . . . Keep Leading!

Jim Hoyme

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Darla Cathcart, DPT
Faculty
UCA Physical Therapy



Nancy Reese, PhD
Chair,
UCA Physical Therapy

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