DPT Graduates

VFTH

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Thirty students will make history during WKU’s commencement weekend as they become the first class to graduate with a Doctorate of Physical Therapy.

It’s the culmination of a six year journey as Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View from the Hill.

It’s been a semester of lasts for the very first class graduating from WKU with a Doctorate of Physical Therapy. Now the long awaited program is well on its way to fulfilling it’s mission of bringing more physical therapists to rural Kentucky.

Katie DiTommaso \DPT Graduate, Class President

Emily Hubbuch \ DPT Graduate

Tom Pennington \ Led Steering Committee for DPT

Kurt Neelly, PT, PhD \Dir. Of Clinical Education

Dr. Neale Chumbler \ Dean, College of Health and Human Services

Hands on training continues for second year PT students --but for the inaugural class, the real world awaits.

“It’s definitely sinking in a little that we’re the first people to graduate.”

”A lot of the students are reflecting back and we’re all thinking awe it’s officially coming to an end now.”

For this first class, the PT journey began in 2013 in Tate Page Hall before the Health Sciences Complex was even finished.

“I think it really humbled us and kind of set the tone as far as starting with a basic level of equipment and resources.”

“For our class it wasn’t the flashy building and all the equipment we had. We were really sold by the professors and faculty that they were there and committed to us for us to succeed.”

That commitment began when local physical therapist Tom Pennington, who led the charge on a DPT at WKU, visited with Dr. Harvey Wallman who had helped start a similar program in Las Vegas.

”We went to Dr. Wallman and basically through the search committee said we’ve got a vision, we’ve got a dream.”

Wallman then pulled together the rest of the top notch staff.

“There’s been a tremendous amount of work that’s been put into this. Since Wallman and I started and even years before that with the advisory board and Dr. Ransdell.”

As this first class prepares to enter the workforce, Pennington says all the hard work has all been worth it.

“You see the commitment of the students, the faculty, the university. This first class is very special to me. And the faculty and the community.”

“As a class we really support each other and want each other to succeed.”

The DPT program’s first graduates will be recognized tomorrow afternoon during a hooding ceremony and during the graduate ceremony tomorrow night.

Three undergraduate ceremonies will be held at Diddle Arena on Saturday.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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