

Amber Krenske

Meta Reflective Essay

Advancing through a doctorate program has been unlike anything I ever would've imagined. I have individually grown a great degree within the last three years. I've matured, changed mind-sets, reformed values, and pursued different desires and dreams. With time, I have noticed these changes in myself and I believe I can greatly attribute these changes to the learning experiences and people I have met throughout my time in the University of Jamestown – Physical Therapy Program (UJPT). Continuing throughout this paper, I will be reflecting upon how my experiences at UJPT have altered aspects of my life that have guided and molded me into the optimistic, passionate, young professional that I am today.

Time/Self-Management

In three years, the difference in my time and self-management has been an astounding transition. As a first year graduate student, I was very meticulous about knowing the material inside-and-out. Studying was my number one priority, and if I wasn't working on school work I felt guilty - as if I wasn't working hard enough. Thinking back to that first year, I was constantly stressed. I surrounded myself with individuals who mimicked similar habits which fed into my poor balance in time-management. My continuum of studying was swayed more towards quantity versus quality. However, at this time in my graduate career, I have developed a more balanced lifestyle.

After gravitating towards classmates that have better time-management strategies and study habits, I have immensely learned how to incorporate these behaviors into my own life. I

can now justify taking a day off from school to enjoy friends, family, and hobbies - realizing that it is OK (truly essential) to do this. Overall, I am a much happier person because I am still partaking in the things I value and enjoy, while still thriving in advancing my education. To me, finding this happiness was vital in working towards my personal vision.

Confidence

Confidence has never been my strong suit. I've heard the same comment time and time again that I need to be confident in myself - whether that be from teachers, coaches, professors, and clinical instructors. After being accepted into the UJPT program, I had a confidence boost - as PT programs are highly competitive to get into; but, even throughout three years I sometimes question if I am truly smart enough to succeed in this profession. To this day, I consistently second guess myself and question my capabilities in didactic work and clinical skills.

Reflecting upon the past three clinical rotations, I have had three fairly different experiences not only because of the site, setting, and my clinical instructor (CI), but also due to my knowledge and self-confidence with patient care.

During my first clinical rotation, I was timid and very uncertain of myself. I proceeded to look to my CI for answers to questions that I truly knew or I would be comfortable taking the "observer" side of things versus being hands-on; which was not necessary in the many low-complexity cases at this site. Thinking about this, I am disappointed in myself for not taking the reins and putting myself out there to help facilitate my professional growth.

During my second clinical rotation, I fell into the technician roll while at a very high-paced private practice clinic. I felt great pressure to perform well because I had observed as a student a few years prior and wanted to show my growth thus far in PT school. I was

comfortable discussing exercise plans, coming up with treatment ideas, and communicating with patients; however, I had very little confidence in myself when it came to evaluating and diagnosing when there were more complex patients. I feel the lack of musculoskeletal knowledge prior to this rotation contributed to my lack of confidence because I felt as though an important portion of my treatment was missing because I didn't have the right tools.

For my third clinical rotation, I again was at a slower paced clinic similar to my first rotation, with the majority of cases classified as low-complexity. However, the main difference at this site was the fact that I felt prepared going into it and had encouraged myself to take more challenging cases instead of taking the backseat. At this point in my schooling, I was confident that I did have the knowledge and experience enabling me to help my patients reach their goals.

In hindsight, throughout each clinical rotation I have grown as a young professional in becoming more confident in my interpersonal, clinical reasoning, and clinical skills. Looking forward, to improve my confidence, it is important to respect my weaknesses and set goals to improve upon them; however, it is also important to recognize my strengths and focus on everything I can do.

Collaborative Work

During my three years at UJPT, the caseload has gradually increased in group projects with our larger projects take place in Spring of 2nd year and Fall of 3rd year. My favorite group project throughout school was without a doubt working with our geriatrics patient. Our patient was a phenomenal woman who played a large role in the change of my perspective path of future physical therapy practice by developing a strong interest in neurological cases and working with the geriatric population. I learned a lot from our patient throughout this time, but the largest

learning curve from this project occurred while working with my peers in this simulated clinical setting.

This project was challenging for me because although each of us three group members were all working towards the same goal, we had ideas of differing paths to get there. We realized that each of us assessed and treated very differently, even though we all were taught by the same program. Throughout the few months of treating this patient, I feel I started to find my voice in group projects. A follower by nature, I tend to agree with others ideas and follow through with their plans. But during this project, when it came to determining plans for treatment sessions, I ensured that my ideas were heard.

I was passionate about finding interventions that would benefit our patient with consideration of our limited knowledge of treating neurological conditions. Within our group, there were differing levels of understanding of how interventions vary dependent upon orthopedic, neurological, cardiovascular, etc. case involvement. Within group discussion, we were able to openly discuss why we believed a specific intervention would be beneficial as well as bounce off each other's ideas to make each intervention more valuable to our patient. This project truly taught us three group members how to succeed in collaborative work.

Summary

As I've described above, the last three years are irreplaceable and have shaped me into the young professional I am today. Although there is still so much for me to learn in this ever-evolving profession, I believe that with my skill-set gained at UJPT paired with my individual improvement of self/time-management, confidence, and collaborative work throughout my

didactic and clinical experiences has prepared me to move forward with the next phase of my professional career. I'm excited to see what the next chapter will bring.