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2024 PTI Scholar – FHEL 2024-2025 Project Abstract

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Project Title: *A Readiness-Based Approach to Mitigating Healthcare Education Attrition & Promoting Workforce Development*

Introduction/Aim: This project, developed as part of the APTA Academy of Education Fellowship in Higher Education Leadership (FHEL), addresses the growing need to improve student readiness and reduce attrition in healthcare education programs across Louisiana. The primary objective was to conduct a statewide needs assessment to identify academic and non-academic barriers affecting incoming student success in professional healthcare programs.

Subjects/Methods: Data were collected through surveys and interviews with program faculty and administrators, providing critical insight into the preparedness of pre-health students.

Results: Findings revealed that students commonly lacked foundational knowledge in core sciences, particularly anatomy, physiology, and medical terminology, and had limited early exposure to the expectations of rigorous professional training. In addition to these academic gaps, non-academic challenges such as low resilience, limited access to mentorship, and a lack of personal development resources emerged as significant factors influencing student retention and performance.

Discussion/Conclusion: In response, the Pre-Health Initiative Program is being developed using a comprehensive academic readiness framework that engages content experts across the University of Louisiana System. The initiative provides targeted support in foundational sciences, research literacy, professional development, and community engagement. It also emphasizes the development of resilience and self-efficacy among diverse undergraduate students pursuing careers in healthcare.

This project was inspired by the author's leadership journey as a physical therapy educator and administrator and is rooted in a long-standing commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. By aligning student success strategies with institutional and workforce development goals, this initiative aims to build sustainable pathways for underrepresented students in healthcare, ultimately advancing equity in health professions education.

NOTE: Dr. Ashanti was partially funded by a PTLI Scholarship to participate in the APTA Fellowship for Higher Education Leadership (FHEL) and complete this capstone project. This project summary is being shared with PTLI for their website as an expectation of the PTLI Scholar Program. PTLI looks forward to following Dr. Ashanti and her work as she continues in her DPT education leadership journey. Should this FHEL initiated project continue, this data may be included in other presentations/written submissions of this author.