



## Connecting Dots: Colorado Mesa University Physician Assistant Program

In spring of 2016, the CMU Board of Trustees approved development of a Master of Physician Assistant Studies (PA) program. The ARC-PA has granted Accreditation-Provisional status to the Colorado Mesa University Physician Assistant Program and CMU admitted its first PA class in the Spring of 2019. CMU admitted its first class of 16 students from a competitive applicant pool in January of 2019. CMU received over 1500 applications in progress, and the inaugural class was chosen from over 600 completed applications. The program admissions cycle opened again in April of 2019 and the program received over 1,000 applications for the 22 seats available for the second cohort that will matriculate into the program beginning in January of 2020. **This second cohort and the 28-person cohorts thereafter are entirely dependent on the program receiving the necessary resources to grow the cohort size. Additional classrooms, labs, faculty, and support staff are important infrastructure that must be in place to continue to grow enrollment.** On March 30, 2017, the Board also authorized CMU to conceptually move forward with launching new programs in Physical Therapy (PT) and Occupational Therapy (OT). CMU expects to begin its OT program in January 2021 and is working through the development and accreditation process for PT. These programs, which are expected to enroll a three-year cohort of over 250 students, will require additional space. CMU has therefore requested state capital funds (CCF) and cash spending authority in order to fund the approximately 22,000 square foot PA/PT/OT Center in the center of its main campus in Grand Junction. While the project scored very high during the competitive 2019 capital construction funding process, unfortunately it was just below the last project to be funded on the list. Given the imperative to bend the healthcare cost curve and enhance access to qualified practitioners in rural and urban settings alike, a coalition of hospitals, providers, business groups and local governments has formed to support this project. A selection of support letters is attached to this summary.

The pending request for capital construction funds is summarized as follows:

Funding Source	Total Project Cost	Total Prior Appropriation	Current Budget Year Request
Capital Construction Request (CCF)	\$9,974,724	\$0	\$9,974,724
CMU Matching Funds	\$2,043,017	\$0	\$2,043,017
<b>Total Funds (TF)</b>	<b>\$12,017,741</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$12,017,741</b>

### Long-term employment projections in Colorado

Occupation	2016 Estimated Employment	2026 projected employment	Total 2016-2026 Employment Change	Annual Average Percent Change	Avg. Annual Openings
<b>Physician Assistant</b>	2,950	4,080	1,130	38.4%	280
<b>Physical Therapist</b>	5,030	7,260	2,230	44.4%	490
<b>Occupational Therapist</b>	2,780	3,790	1,010	36.5%	260

To better capture local data on the need for program expansion, a workforce needs assessment was conducted in collaboration with staff from CMU's Office of Institutional Research. An electronic survey was sent in November of 2016 to 206 medical clinics, hospital systems, and therapists in Western Colorado. The response rate was 26.2% (n=54).

### Western Colorado data on program need

Occupation	% of respondents indicating a moderate to high need for new graduates	% of respondents indicating that it is difficult to very difficult to recruit or retain professionals	% of respondents that indicated a high likelihood to hire a professionals in these fields in the next 5 years	Indicated number of Professionals needed in Western Colorado in the next 5 years
<b>Physician Assistant</b>	60.8%	47.1%	58.1%	32
<b>Physical Therapist</b>	70.7%	46.8%	76.5%	85
<b>Occupational Therapist</b>	61.9%	50.8%	59.1%	29