

## **Executive Summary: Program Review for the Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation Sciences (RHS) Weber State University, Department of Athletic Training and Occupational Therapy (ATOT)**

This executive summary outlines the key achievements, status, curriculum, student outcomes, and strategic goals for the Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation Sciences (RHS) program at Weber State University (WSU). This program review highlights substantial operational and curricular changes implemented since the 2019-2020 review, with a focus on enhancing the program's pre-professional identity and preparing students for competitive graduate healthcare pathways.

### **I. Program Transition, Identity, and Growth**

The RHS program, formerly known as Athletic Therapy, is a pre-professional undergraduate degree designed specifically to prepare students for entry into professional graduate programs in the health professions, such as athletic training, physical therapy, occupational therapy, physician assistant programs, or medicine.

**Strategic Mission and Positioning (Standard A):** The mission is to prepare culturally competent students for professional graduate studies in health professions, providing foundational knowledge in injury evaluation techniques and therapeutic interventions. The RHS program offers a unique advantage over traditional science majors (e.g., biology or chemistry) by providing a necessary balance of didactic and psychomotor learning, introducing students to clinical healthcare and hands-on skills.

#### **Key Program Changes and Pathways:**

- **Name Change and Phase-Out:** The program name officially changed from Athletic Therapy to Rehabilitation Sciences in May 2021 to better reflect its pre-professional nature. The four-year phase-out of the Athletic Therapy program concluded in Summer 2025 with the graduation of the final cohort.
- **Enrollment Growth:** Since the transition, enrollment in the BS in Rehabilitation Sciences has grown steadily, increasing from 47 students in 2021-2022 to 178 students in 2024-2025.
- **Accelerated Pathways:** The program successfully implemented an accelerated **3+2 pathway** for RHS students pursuing a Master of Science in Athletic Training (MSAT). Furthermore, an affiliation agreement was established in Fall 2024 with Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions, reserving five graduate slots for qualified RHS graduates in their Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy programs, providing assurance for graduate school options.
- **Faculty/Student Ratio:** The Department Student FTE Total for 2024-2025 was 112.00, resulting in a favorable Student/Faculty Ratio of 11.1 in the 2023-2024 academic year.

### **II. Curriculum and Student Learning Outcomes**

The program revised its curriculum to reduce the required credits from 63 to a minimum of 57, thereby allowing students greater flexibility in meeting prerequisites for various graduate programs. The Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) were revised in 2022 to align comprehensively with the program's mission, and assessment data have been collected since 2023.

### **Student Learning Outcomes (PLOs) Assessment (AY 2024-2025):**

Students demonstrated strong performance, meeting or exceeding established competency thresholds (generally 90%) in five of the seven core PLOs:

- **Competencies Met (100% Threshold Achievement):** Students met the threshold in educating patients in safe performance (PLO 1, RHS 4250 labs); implementing evaluation techniques (PLO 2, RHS 3300/3301 final video assessments); reconditioning patients (PLO 5, RHS 4250 case and rehab plan); written critical appraisal of clinical research (PLO 6, RHS 4250 annotated bibliography); and professional management practices (PLO 7, RHS 4650 projects).
- **Effective Communication (PLO 4):** Supervisors rated more than 90% of students as communicating effectively with the healthcare team during internships.

**Areas for Improvement (Thresholds Not Met):** Two outcomes related to clinical judgment and presentation skills fell below the 90% benchmark:

1. **Formulating a Clinical Impression (PLO 3):** Thresholds were missed in RHS 4150 final exam essays (64.71% met threshold) and RHS 3301 SOAP notes (87.50% met threshold).
2. **Critical Appraisal via Oral Presentation (PLO 6):** Thresholds were not met during the RHS 4150 Ignite presentations (76.47% met the threshold in Fall 2024).

**Action Plan:** Faculty attributed these lower scores primarily to the online delivery of RHS 4150 in Fall 2024, which limited hands-on practice. The program will revise the online version of RHS 4150 and work toward greater standardization between online and face-to-face course delivery.

**Concurrent Enrollment (CE) and DFWI Rates:** The program offers two required courses (RHS 2175 and RHS 2300) through concurrent enrollment, providing students with a 6-credit head start.

- While DFWI rates in the on-campus introductory course (RHS 1550) significantly decreased from 19.5% (2021-2022) to 6.8% (2024-2025) due to the diligent use of Starfish alerts and advising, concurrent enrollment offerings show higher failure/withdrawal rates.
- CE DFWI rates for RHS 2175 (9.3%) and RHS 2300 (11.4%) are substantially higher than their on-campus counterparts (2.6% and 2.1%, respectively). The program plans to address this by training CE instructors to identify students who may be struggling early on in the course and reach out to them with their on-campus high school support.

### III. Faculty, Advising, and Program Support

#### Advising and Faculty (Standards D & E):

- **Advising:** The program enhanced student support by expanding a part-time academic advisor role (created in 2021) to a full-time Academic Advisor/Recruiter/Marketer in Fall 2024. The application process was streamlined to three application cycles annually. Career advising is integrated into RHS 1550 and internship assignments.
- **Faculty:** All faculty teaching Rehabilitation courses hold at least a master's degree, with several holding terminal degrees (EdD or PhD). Faculty engage in collaborative decision-making during weekly department meetings.

#### Program Support and Facilities (Standard F):

- **Administrative Support Needs:** Following the resignation of the administrative specialist in 2023, administrative duties are currently managed by the academic advisor/recruiter and a work-study student. This arrangement is insufficient, especially with the addition of the Occupational Therapy Assistant program. The Dean's office has approved funding to hire a part-time administrative specialist as of November 2025. We hope to achieve funding for a full-time administrative specialist by Fall 2026.
- **Facilities:** Facilities in the Swenson Building are adequate and shared with the MSAT program. Resources include a laboratory classroom (Room 315) with approximately \$100,000 in therapy equipment, and a Gait Analysis/Biomechanics lab equipped with advanced systems. Library resources are more than adequate, supported by a dedicated librarian.

### IV. Progress Since Last Review and Program Demand

**Fulfillment of Previous Program Review Recommendations (Standard H):** The program successfully fulfilled all six major recommendations arising from the 2019-2020 review:

1. **Renaming the Program:** Successfully changed the name to Rehabilitation Sciences and completed the phase-out of the Athletic Therapy program in Summer 2025.
2. **Curricular Flexibility:** Revised the curriculum, reduced required credits (63 to 57), and created elective options and pre-professional maps to better accommodate prerequisites for diverse graduate programs.
3. **Admissions/Advising:** Hired a full-time academic advisor/recruiter/marketer and streamlined admissions to three annual cycles.
4. **Learning Outcomes:** Resolved the unmet learning outcome in AT 3300 by revising the course (RHS 3300/3301), removing oral practical exams, and implementing new capstone assessments (evaluation video podcasts), successfully meeting the competency threshold.
5. **Standardization:** Standardized the delivery of the concurrent enrollment course, RHS 2175, using a Canvas Sandbox course.

#### External Relations and Career Outcomes (Standards G & I):

- **Advisory Board:** An external advisory board consisting of six healthcare professionals (AT, PT, OT, PA, DC, MD) was established in November 2022 to ensure curriculum relevance. Suggestions implemented include weaving shared decision-making into RHS 4250 and recommending advisory board members as initial contacts for students seeking internships.
- **Graduate Success:** The departmental acceptance rate for medical school in the 2024-2025 academic year was 100% (one graduate accepted). The departmental average MCAT score is 508, which exceeds both the WSU and National averages.
- **Market Demand:** Job growth projections for related professional fields in the Mountain Division region (2019-2023) are strong, with notable increases expected in Physician Assistant (57% growth), Athletic Training (63% growth), and Physical Therapy (34% growth). Related health and medical occupations in Utah are projected to grow by 23.9% between 2020 and 2025.

## V. Conclusion and Future Focus

The Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation Sciences program has successfully transitioned its identity and curriculum to become a robust pre-professional program. The focus for the immediate future is centered on addressing instructional standardization and support staff needs:

1. **Improve Online Instruction:** Revise the online delivery of RHS 4150 and standardize content to improve student performance in clinical impression formulation (PLO 3) and oral critical appraisal (PLO 6).
2. **Mitigate CE DFWI Rates:** Train concurrent enrollment instructors on identifying at-risk students early to reduce the high DFWI rates observed in RHS 2175 and RHS 2300.
3. **Secure Administrative Specialist:** Obtain funding for and hire a full-time administrative specialist by September 2026 to adequately support the growing department and its new programs.