

The Development of Leadership in Physical Therapy: Component Leaders
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Purpose/Hypothesis: The purpose of this qualitative study, the second of a four part study, is to describe and explain the development of leadership in the field of physical therapy.

Subjects: Twenty randomized component presidents of the American Physical Therapy Association.

Methods and Materials: Subjects were blocked by gender and then randomized. The component presidents were contacted by email and informed consent was obtained. A set of standardized interview questions was approved by the IRB. Phone interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed. Five researchers independently coded each transcribed interview to identify recurring themes. Reliability was addressed through the use of low inference descriptors and multiple independent examiners. Validity was established through systematic coding, analytical triangulation and a search for negative evidence.

Results: Eight themes were identified in this study. Five of the themes were consistent with those themes identified in the first phase of the study: Importance of Mentors, Participation in Community Activities Prior to Physical Therapy School, Influence of Physical Therapy Faculty as Role Models, Opportunity, and Student Involvement in Professional Activities. A theme identified in the first phase of the study, Strategic Planning Toward Leadership, was not consistent with the current data. Three new themes were identified including: Connection to the Profession, Encouragement to Serve, and Love for the Profession.

Conclusion: Leaders influence the environment, set values for the organization, and represent the organization. A variety of factors influence the development of leadership in physical therapy. Identifying pathways to leadership is important in facilitating the development of future leaders in the profession.