

Fred Breidenbach '14

Please provide your biographical information.

I majored in Pre-Physical Therapy and minored in Nutrition. I'm from Wilmington, DE. West Chester had the right combination of a quality baseball program and a quality academic program. On my visit I was able to tour with the academic staff and that was a very attractive quality of the University and department that I was hoping to be accepted into.

What made you go into your degree?

I had a long injury history while playing sports in high school. Without physical therapy, I do not believe that I could have achieved my athletic goals, both in high school and college.

What is your official title and what are your responsibilities in your current position?

Current: Sports Resident at University of Delaware. I am a clinical therapist currently specializing in Sports Physical Therapy. I spend my weekly hours treating, teaching in the Physical Therapy Department, working as a consultation source with the University of Delaware Athletic Program, and shadowing Orthopedic Surgeons in clinic hours as well as during surgery.

Future: I will be transitioning to Optimum Physical Therapy in West Chester, PA. I will be a Staff Physical Therapist and Board Certified Sports Specialist, with the goal of working primarily with overhead athletes and concussions.

What is a typical day at work like?

A typical day for me currently would begin in surgery or at an Orthopedic Surgeon's office shadowing him through his/her cases for the day. Following that I will treat patients independently until the evening and then transition over to my role as a clinical instructor. This includes helping supervise DPT students in our teaching clinic, as we have a program that allows students to treat patients under the guidance of a licensed Physical Therapist as part of their academic learning. A few times a week I also spend time in the University of Delaware Athletic Training Room working with the University's Football team. On most weekends I'll spend Saturday and occasionally Sunday working sporting events across the state to gain additional live acute injury management experience.

What have been the biggest challenges at work?

As a first-year therapist, the largest challenges are always the clinical capabilities. I work at a teaching University/Clinic so we often receive more complicated cases, or cases that have not had success at other sites. Knowing how to manage these patients with very little clinical experience is always challenging. Luckily, we have very experienced Senior Therapists that mentor us and assist along the way when needed.

What do you enjoy most about your current position?

I enjoy the mentorship from more experienced therapists the most. There is always someone to bounce questions or ideas off of, which makes the "unknown" of being a new therapist that much easier. I also think it is just an extremely valuable way to gather new tips/tricks/insight to make you a better therapist.

What skills, talents, and other traits are useful and necessary to do your job?

People skills is #1. If you can't talk to people, the profession will be a challenge for you. Not only does this include small talk, but it also includes having difficult or blunt conversations with people. Every person is *so* different, so you have to be malleable and adaptable in the ways you talk to people, particularly when the goal is to get them healthy.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

My free time is pretty non-existent right now, but I always try to golf as much as I can. I no longer participate in baseball, so I enjoy having something additional to fill that competitive void. Other than that, I'm a nerd, so I find myself reading quite a lot on the newest research in the PT field.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

The goal in five years is simply to be a better, more rounded clinician than I am today. However, if I was dreaming, I would love to be in the process of opening a branch of a Physical Therapy Clinic that is more tailored to athletes' needs. This would ideally include Physical Therapists, Strength and Conditioning Specialists, and other health professionals (local or referrals) working together in the best interest of the athlete.

What advice would you give to a current student who aspires to follow in your footsteps and pursue a similar career path?

My advice is pretty simple and boring, but I would suggest that 1.) You NEED to nail down your academics. PT school is very competitive, and you need to stand out in EVERY way you can. 2.) Anyone interested in Physical Therapy should engross themselves in the field, be it volunteering, aiding, independent reading, or seeking out the best internship opportunities. You will know pretty quickly if it is the field for you.

How has your WCU education contributed to your success?

I think that a large part of anyone's success comes from the people that inspire you along the way. I can say that while at WCU, there were professors and clinicians along the way that truly ignited my passion in the health field. This has continued to serve me with my independent development along the way.

What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishments (both personally and professionally)?

Although collegiate baseball gave me some of the best memories of my life. I would say that completing my Doctorate in Physical Therapy and receiving the Faculty Award in the presence of my family and best friends is the greatest accomplishment for me, both personally and professionally. Most of my planning from the moment I entered college was to complete that degree and being able to accomplish that while also receiving additional recognition for my successes made the time and sacrifices along the way that much more rewarding.

What's your favorite memory from when you were a student at WCU?

No question, it would be when we won the 2012 National Championship in Baseball.