

# Candidate Statement – Candidate for Vice President



## Heather Renee Jennings, PT, DPT Board-Certified Clinical Specialist in Neurologic Physical Therapy

Question: What uniquely qualifies you for the role of Vice President, and how does that contribute to the association's vision, mission, and strategic plan?

### Response:

Our profession is committed to transforming society. As a leader in our Association, I exponentially impact the health of society by leading others to positively influence human lives. My own experiences as a full-time clinician allow expression of thoughtful comments to encourage the group to think in a dynamic and transformative way for the betterment of the profession. I thereby challenge and empower others to similarly make meaningful contributions based on their expertise, enabling us to create broadly representative and evolutionary policy and actions. Importantly, I listen more than I speak to hear the collective voice. My personal leadership signature encompasses a spirit of boldness, radical collaboration, and total acceptance of the discomfort that can come with guiding through change. These characteristics highlight my leadership style that uniquely qualifies me to serve you as Vice President of the American Physical Therapy Association.

First, I believe my viewpoint as a full-time clinician at the Boston Veterans Affairs Hospital spinal cord injury unit and as a professional with many years of practice still ahead of me is a strength for working with my Board colleagues. Lessons I have learned from working in an integrated health system, caring for a population over their lifespan, developing a neurologic PT residency program, as well as inpatient care throughout the pandemic, will continue to serve to broaden the Board's lens. As in my previous role as APTA Massachusetts President, I have also leveraged the expertise of others while providing a fresh view not clouded by assumptions or based only on past experiences. I am focused on building the future of the profession I've chosen as we seek elegant solutions to problems that matter.

Second, empowering others is core to who I am. I am driven by personal relationships and the success of the team. Serving as APTA Vice President, my team is you, the 100,000 members. We have all experienced challenges on the functionality of our teams this year, the Board included. Yet, by maintaining a sharp focus on our common Mission and Vision, we were able to respond to crisis swiftly. I brought a steady, strong voice to the Board in a time when we had to choose to actively lead with the best information available versus waiting and risking potential harm to the Association and our members. I will remain steadfast in steering us towards well-considered action and maintaining a close eye on our outcomes. We are all stronger when we reach out, support others, and welcome new voices. My collaborative leadership style continues to seek additional information, invite in alternative perspectives, and foster shared decision-making necessary to lead our profession.

Finally, I listen more than I speak. The APTA Vice President has the tremendous responsibility of leading alongside our President in representing 100,000 members and acting in the best interest of our profession. I continuously commit to seeking information from all pertinent sources and questioning the norm. Only with this high level of preparedness can we make informed choices representing multiple points of view and rapidly communicate those choices. My peers have remarked that when I speak, people listen intently. I am able to speak with authority because my thoughts are well-reasoned, informed, and speak to the needs of others. My inclusive yet focused leadership style of promoting people, points of view and ideas, making data-driven

decisions, and using real-time communication allows me to carry out the policies and actions of the Association.

I will continue to serve you and represent your perspectives across the span of our profession. I will do so by leading, engaging and mentoring others, actively listening, and being a voice that challenges us to make real impact. Last year, I sat wondering what I was accomplishing as a physical therapist while I supervised my patient's socially distanced outdoor family visit. When I shared this thought with a Board colleague, they responded, "Thank you for improving the human experience." We do transform the health of society every time we work with a patient by optimizing movement to improve the human experience. I am prepared to collaborate, to embrace the difficulties as we lead change, and to be bold. Together we can transform the definition of health and advance APTA's mission in the years to come. It would be my privilege to serve you as APTA Vice President. Thank you.

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