

CREATING >



A Culture of Belonging

Supporting Graduate Students

Creating a Culture of Belonging

Intentionally Creating Connections in Graduate Learning Spaces



What's in a Sign

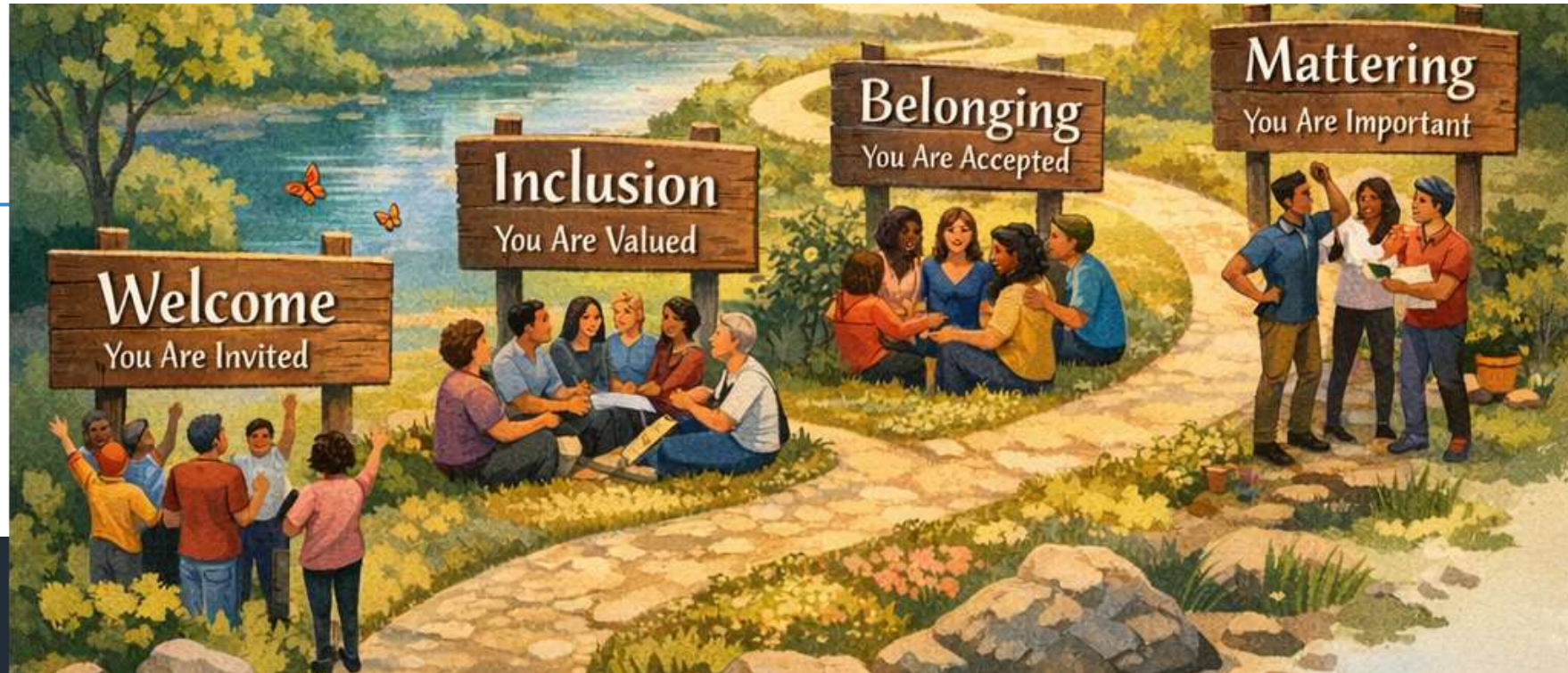
What message are you communicating to your graduate students?

Are they simply 'Welcome' or do they truly 'Belong'?



The Belonging Pathway

The Journey is the Destination



Welcome

To greet someone with pleasure or to receive something gratefully

Making everyone feel welcome, valued and able to participate fully in a group activity or society, regardless of background, ability or identity

Inclusion

Belonging

The deep human need and subjective feeling of security, acceptance and inclusion within a group, where an individual feels valued, respected and able to be their authentic selves.

Feeling valued, appreciated, respected and recognized by others and adding value to ourselves and others by making a difference in the world.

Mattering

How Do You Lead Your Graduate School?

Which One Are You?

The Thermometer

Measures the Culture



- Reacts to Environment
- Observes Problems
- Follows the Status Quo
- Hopes for the best

The Thermostat

Sets the Culture



- Shapes the Environment
- Inspires Vision
- Creates Change
- Builds intentionally

Audience Participation Time

Think of a time when you felt that you belonged

How did you feel?

What happened that made you feel that you belonged?

How do you feel thinking back on that moment?



Think of a time when you felt that you DID NOT belong

How did you feel?

What happened that made you feel that you belonged?

How do you feel thinking back on that moment?





Fitting In \neq Belonging

Maslow's Hierarchy of Need

A.H. Maslow (1943)

"A Theory of Human Motivation"

Physiological Needs
(food, sleep)

Safety and Security
(financial, health, family)



Love and Belonging
(connection, friendship)

Self-Esteem
(confidence, respect of others and by others)

Self-Actualization
(morality, creativity, problem solving)

We were made for connection. We are wired for community.
We feel different when we belong.

A Sense of Belonging for Graduate Students:

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



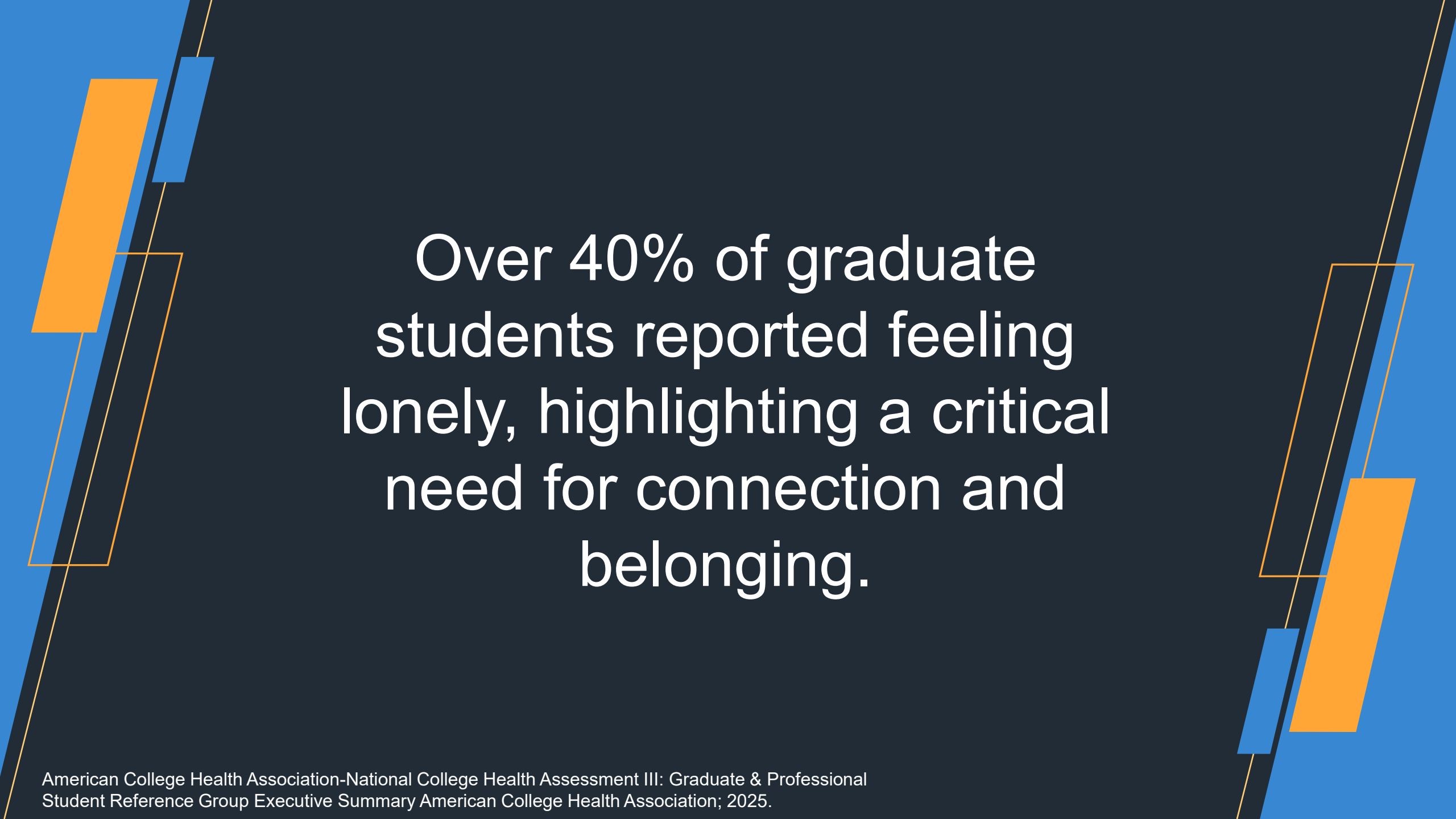
*Building a Sense of Belonging
Leads to Success & Well-Being!*

Applying Maslow to our Graduate Students

Why is This Important?

- Fewer than 7/10 graduate students feel that they belong at their institution. This drops to 5/10 for transgender/non-conforming students.
- Only 6/10 graduate students felt that their university encouraged free and open discussion about student's health and well-being.





Over 40% of graduate students reported feeling lonely, highlighting a critical need for connection and belonging.

What are the Impacts of Increasing Belonging?

- Increase in resilience
- Increase in retention
- Improved learning
- Good Longitudinal effect

Gaplan and Brady (2019), Murphy et al (2020)



Reminder!

Undergrad data, but similar impacts will be seen in graduate students





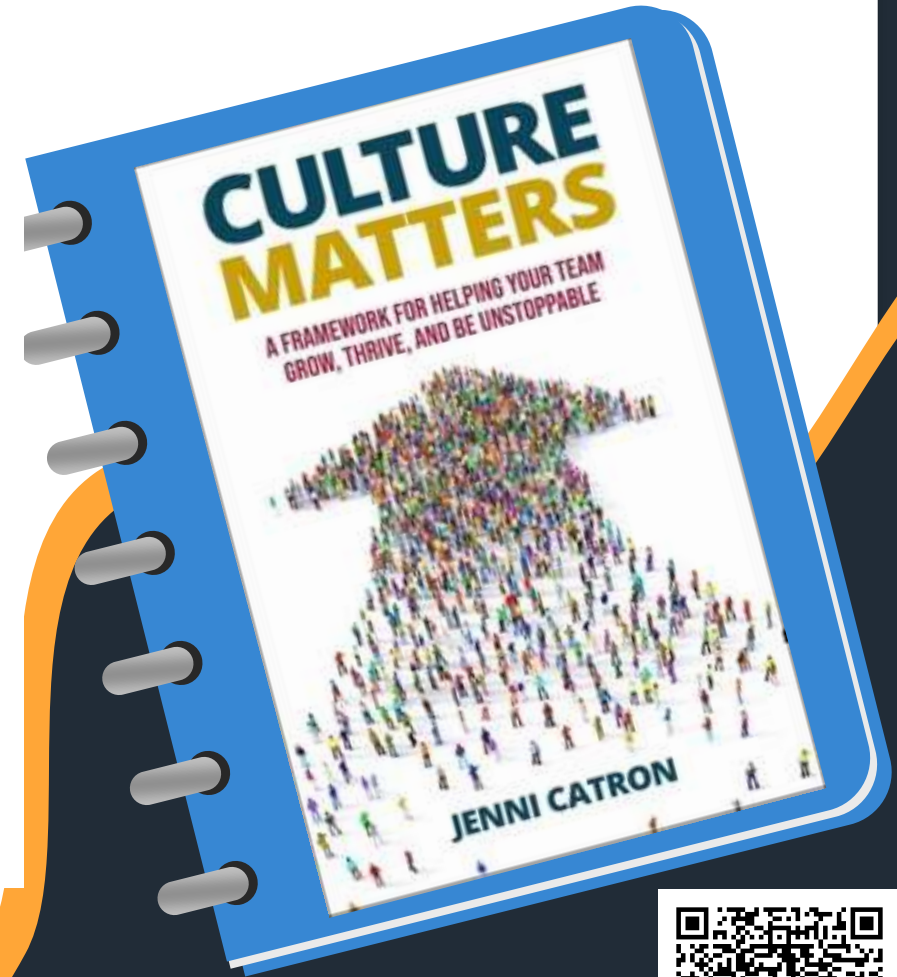
How Do We Create a Culture of Belonging?

“You can have all the right strategies in the world; if you don’t have the right culture, you’re dead.”

Patrick Whitesell

Strategically Planning Culture

- Hope is not a strategy
- You must be intentional in creating culture
- Follow the process for incremental change to achieve large results



This is not about strategy, it is about behavior



Assess

Where are we now?
Are basic needs being met?
Is my purpose clear?
Do I feel psychologically safe?
Does this translate to my students?



Define

Who are we as a team?
How do we work together?
What is our mission?
How do our actions impact our students?

“There is no magic formula for great company cultures. The key is to treat your staff how you would like to be treated.”

Richard Branson

Step 1 - Assess



What type of culture exists in your department/program?



How have you created this culture, or did you inherit it?

Do you like it? Why/why not?

This is not about strategy, it is about behavior



Assess

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Step 2 - Define



What is your graduate identity?

What is your graduate mission?



What is your teams values?

How do your graduate programs work together?

Changing behavior takes time, effort and intentionality



Build

What will it take to start a new culture?
What consistent incremental changes
can we start today?
What can I do in my classroom to help
everyone feel they belong?
Connection is key.



Equip

How much time do I spend on campus
outside of class?
How often do I attend student activities?
Am I present where my students are?
Am I intentional about helping students
belong?

“Culture matters. In strong cultures you’re motivated, energized, and fully committed. In bad cultures you lack motivation, are drained of energy, are disengaged and are always looking for an escape.”

Jenni Catron

Step 3 - Build



What step will you start with to change your culture?



How will you engage your faculty to draw them into your new culture?

Changing behavior takes time, effort and intentionality



Commit

Are you committed to your team's plan?
Are you ready to put your students first?
Are you ready to change your schedule
to improve your students' belonging?
Commit to your team.

“A brave leader is someone who says I see you. I hear you. I don't have all the answers, but I'm going to keep listening and asking questions.”

Brené Brown

“Culture matters. In strong cultures you're motivated, energized, and fully committed. In bad cultures you lack motivation, are drained of energy, are disengaged and are always looking for an escape.”

Jenni Catron

FITT-VP Principles

- **F**requency – regular activities are better
- **I**ntensity – involvement of your audience
- **T**ime – long time/low intensity compared to short time/high intensity
- **T**ype – appropriate for the group
- **V**olume – do not overload them
- **P**rogression – change things up to keep interest



Moving Forward

Addressing barriers is crucial for fostering belonging.

Be Intentional

- Be intentional as teams to create a culture of belonging for your students.
- Belonging does not need to be to the institution, it can be to your program.

Create a Culture Plan

- Culture plans are absent
- “Culture eats strategy for lunch.” Peter Drucker
- Create a culture plan and stick to it.

Randy Ross (Relationomics)

“A remarkable culture is a place where people believe the best in one another, want the best for one another, and expect the best from one another.”

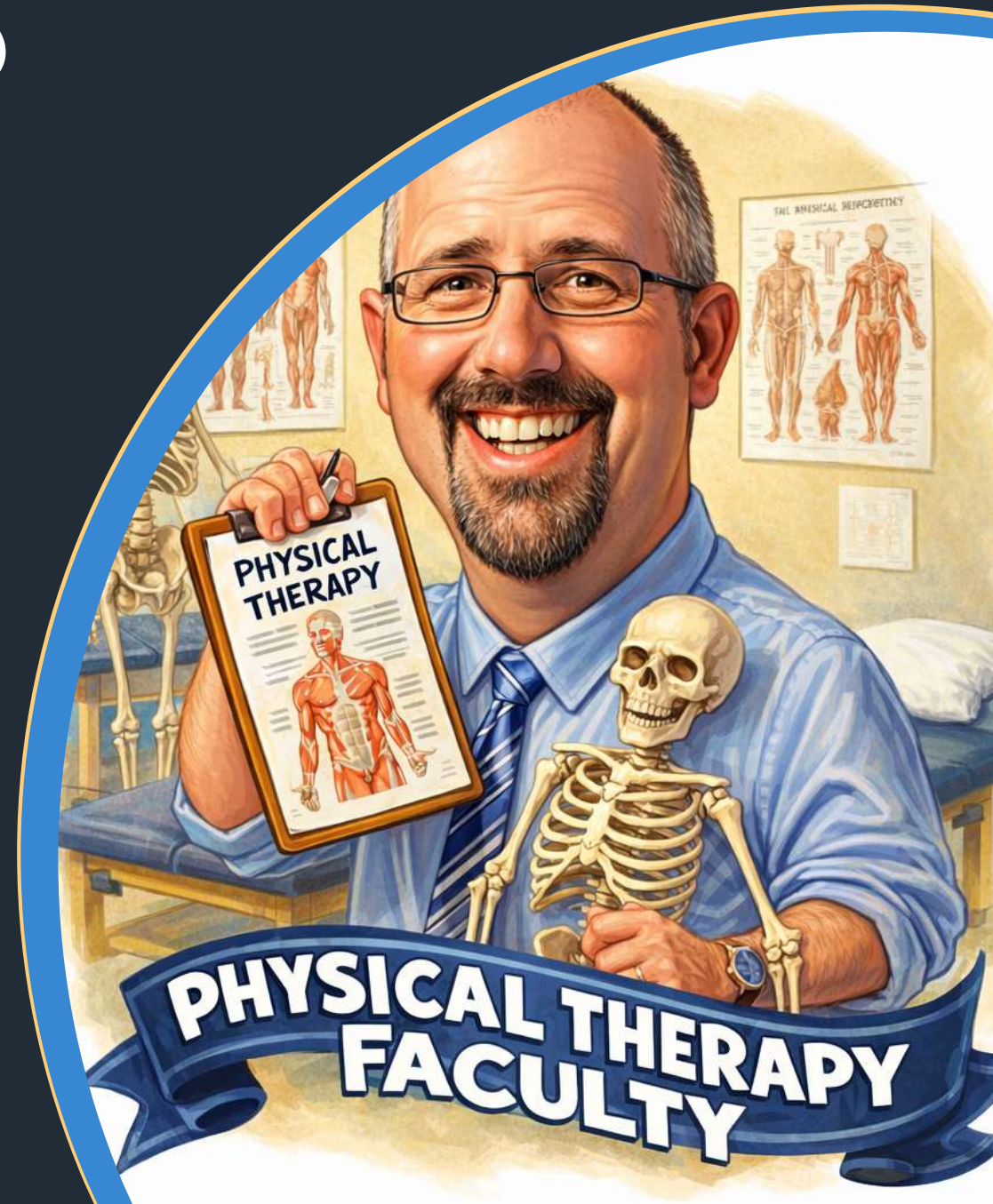
Questions?

Thank you for joining me

Are there any questions?

Dr Jason A Craig, PT, DPhil
Professor of Physical Therapy
Marymount University

jcraig@marymount.edu



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