"African Americans love watermelon." “He’s Asian so he must be smart.” “Most White people are racist.” “Women are able to tolerate more pain than men.” You may have heard some of these common sayings. These are stereotypes. They can be based on several demographics including race, geography, gender, age, etc. Stereotypes are defined as false and generalized images/ideas of a particular type of person or thing. These statements can be offensive, incorrect, and popular. Hence, it’s important that we educate ourselves and ask two simple questions. Does this statement/ideology have any evidence to support the claims? How could a population be affected by this false image? Negative perceptions can hinder opportunities, alienate groups and lead to divisiveness. Interestingly enough, stereotypes can be seen in the physical therapy world as well. Many patients think that physical therapy is founded on massage/manual therapy. While physical therapy does incorporate this, the profession also utilizes several other interventions such as exercise prescription, modalities, patient education, etc. Conversely, many PTs believe that an increase in age is equivalent to a decrease in ability, although, while age and ability are correlated, each person is different and should be treated as such. Assuming that an older patient has low ability without allowing the individual to show you first can hold them back from achieving optimal improvement. This is in fact considered ageism. With all of this being said when we wake up in the morning, we must look at ourselves in the mirror, check our biases, and educate one another. Doing so will only lead to a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive tomorrow.
PT OF THE MONTH: CINDY TUCKER

- What is your name and Position (ex. PT, SPT, Pre-PT student)?
  ○ Cindy Tucker, Director of Rehabilitation Northwestern West Region
- Where are you from?
  ○ Born and raised in Canada. I was recruited to NIU for gymnastics and verified that NIU had a PT program prior to committing.
- What is your Ethnicity, gender, religion?
  ○ Caucasian, Female
- What made you want to become a PT?
  ○ I sustained a hip injury when I was 13 and was referred to PT at the local university. Throughout my treatment I realized that this was a profession that I could imagine myself working in. My PT showed up to work in shorts and running shoes - and didn’t appear to have any paperwork to complete. I was sold on the idea of becoming a PT.
- How would you explain your experience getting into PT school?
  ○ At the time of my application, I was unaware of the large number of applicants for the NIU program. At the time I did not explore applying to other programs and was naïve on how competitive the application/acceptance process was. We didn’t have an in-person interview, which I feel would have been helpful to the selection committee. I remember waiting for the response was VERY stressful.
- How would you explain your experience throughout PT school so far?
  ○ I loved PT school. I felt as though once I was admitted, the peer competition decreased, and we were able to focus on the different classes without increased pressure of perfection. The PT professors were incredibly helpful and wanted every student to succeed.
- In what ways do you think your background, life experiences, and identity/identities impacted (good or bad) you in life?
  ○ I feel as though my background as a gymnast was incredibly helpful in my success in becoming a PT. I had a great sense of how the body works, moves and how to cue people toward optimal movement patterns from my gymnastic coaching and spotting experience. I think this is why I initially started out as a pediatric therapist. I also feel that my experiences of being a college athlete have helped me throughout my career, as it taught me hard work, teamwork, social skills, how to respond to adverse situations and how to communicate effectively.