PURPOSE: Occupational and Physical Therapy practitioners collaborate in a variety of contexts. The question arose as to whether entry level occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT) students feel prepared to collaborate on internships. Little opportunity for University of Minnesota (U of MN) OT and PT students to collaborate in the didactic environment exists.

DESCRIPTION: We designed a mixed methods study to elucidate foundational knowledge of OT and PT students preparing to begin internships. Students were provided the opportunity to first understand each other's professions, then asked to participate in a small group case analysis, followed by a facilitated large group debriefing. We compared results from those who interacted interprofessionally (OT and PT) to those that participated uniprofessionally (OT only).

OBSERVATIONS: Students indicated they felt prepared to collaborate in practice environments. Between the uniprofessional and interprofessional groups, there was a significant difference in self-perceived ability to collaborate with others (p < 0.05). Qualitative comments identified themes related to practice, and sub-themes of collaboration, clinical practice, similarities/differences, and terminology.

CONCLUSIONS: The interprofessional opportunity was well-received by students, who reported wanting to have more opportunities to collaborate with each other prior to internships. Students reported surprise at similarities and differences between their two professions and identified ways to effectively enhance patient care through in practice. We concluded one session was not enough to support development of interprofessional competence.

IMPLICATIONS: With the positive response from students, both programs are exploring opportunities to collaborate more through academic and clinical learning experiences. Further, students desire greater awareness of the healthcare professionals they will be partnering with as practitioners. This opportunity illuminated the need for programs to offer more collaborative opportunities for students throughout their education. University of Minnesota OT and PT Programs are pursuing a broader integration of interprofessional activities.