Occupational Therapy Department Mission

The mission of the Occupational Therapy Department at Misericordia University is to provide an educational environment that reflects values and attitudes of justice, mercy, service, and hospitality, in order to promote development of highly skilled professionals who are culturally competent, ethical, innovative, responsible, and involved occupational therapists serving diverse communities. We strive to emphasize quality graduate education through the use of **evidence-based practice** and **clinical reasoning** to achieve client-centered outcomes. Our graduates will be prepared as leaders to work interprofessionally and advocate for health maintenance and promotion within changing environments.

Philosophy of Occupational Therapy Education

Humans are complex beings who engage in occupations that occur in diverse social, physical, temporal, cultural, personal and virtual contexts (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2017). Humans are also therefore occupational beings, with occupation representing the primary means through which we interact with these environments. The desire to engage in occupations is innate (Wilcock, 2006) and is fundamental to health promotion and wellness, remediation or restoration, compensation and adaptation, health maintenance, and disease and injury prevention (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2017). An understanding of how humans engage with their world as occupational beings is an essential component of education for occupational therapy professionals. The learning context includes the curriculum and pedagogy, and a dynamic transaction exists between the learning context and the teaching learning process as students learn (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2015).

The quality of occupational performance and the experience of each occupation are unique and situational, and reflect the dynamic factors intrinsic to the person, the contexts in which the experience occurs, and the characteristics of the occupation (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2017). Dysfunction in occupational performance is an individually determined state of being (Velde & Fidler, 2002). The use of occupation to promote individual, community and population health is the core of occupational therapy practice, education, research and advocacy (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2017).The challenge exists to educate a generalist, within a foundation of the liberal arts and an understanding of issues related to diversity, who can impact each client through using the power of occupation.

The education of the occupational therapy student is guided by several beliefs. The essence of knowledge is tentative, fluid, and contingent with specific moments within practice (Hooper & Wood, 2014). We believe that individuals construct knowledge based on their unique interpretation of meaningful experiences. Education is not a product to be delivered, but rather is a process to be facilitated with each student. Faculty can encourage the construction of knowledge by setting the stage for meaningful interactions, reflections, and experiences; however, students are the architects of their own learning. The role of the student is to actively engage in occupations during the learning process, engage in self-assessment and collaborate with other students in an increasingly self-directed manner. Involvement of the student in community based initiatives that reflect the values of mercy, service, justice and hospitality lead to the development of role emergent and creative professionals who are capable of taking the initiative to respond to the needs of their clients and communities. Engaging students in contributions that add to the profession's body of knowledge provides a means for them to be developers of knowledge rather than merely recipients of information. Through this active

process, the student develops the ability to critically think, develop professional behaviors, and integrate the skills necessary to become a lifelong learner. The reasoning process becomes refined over time, and is always guided by the principles of being client-centered, occupation-based, theory driven and evidence-based (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2015)

References

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Velde, B & Fidler, G. (2002). Lifestyle performance: A model for engaging the power of occupation. Thorofare, NJ: Slack.
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CURRICULUM DESIGN

The Design

The manner in which the Occupational Therapy curriculum is delivered is complex. The Occupational Therapy curriculum is designed in such a way as to reflect the values and intent of the profession. The program integrates the profession's philosophy, the University and Program mission, and the educational outcome goals of the curriculum, including didactic, fieldwork and experiential components.

Within the Occupational Therapy curriculum, students learn to analyze situations critically, think logically, employ scientific methodology, and appreciate the arts to use in their work. Graduates will express themselves clearly and persuasively, considering the numerous dimensions of the person, context, and occupations.

Our curriculum promotes the application of ethical standards and the active participation in professional organizations, advocacy for consumers and commitment to lifelong learning.

This curriculum is designed on beliefs that the Occupational Therapy faculty hold in regard to professional education. We hold that these beliefs are in accordance with our philosophy and reflect the program mission and curricular goals are well incorporated into program goals. These include the following concepts:

- The development of transformation knowledge occurs in a sequential process beginning with basic concepts/techniques and progressing to increasingly more complex constructs and application of these concepts and constructs in practice
- Individuals construct knowledge based on their unique interpretation of meaningful experiences with an emphasis on occupation

- Skills of inquiry, critical reasoning, and problem solving are essential professional behaviors for practicing occupational therapists
- Continuous examination and definition of one's own values and attitudes are critical steps in the growth and development of professional behaviors and ethical practice.
- Development of interpersonal skills and an appreciation of the value of collaboration must be integral to all learning experiences.

OT Program Curricular Goals

1. Apply the foundational knowledge from anatomy and physiology, occupational science, sociology, human development, neurology, and psychology**.**
2. Analyze the complexity of humans as occupational beings whose lives are sustained and enhanced by engagement in meaningful goal-directed occupations.
3. Apply clinical reasoning throughout the occupational therapy process using the OT Practice Framework as a guide to establish individual, group, population focused intervention programs which are client-centered and occupation-based, as entry level generalists with an advanced area of focus.
4. Integrate culturally relevant content into the interpersonal, interprofessional, and occupational therapy process when working with diverse communities and their members.
5. Both in generalized and focused areas of practice, evaluate, design, and implement theoretically sound and evidence-based occupational therapy services in traditional, nontraditional and emerging areas.
6. Implement the research process to substantiate clinical outcomes, advance the profession of occupational therapy, and support evidenced based practice.
7. Utilize leadership, policy, educational, and advocacy skills that will provide a framework for the 21st century generalized practitioner and leader that upholds ethical and current professional standards.

CURRICULUM THEMES

Four themes provide the overarching structure to the curriculum design. These themes were developed in consideration of ACOTE Standards, graduate education and rapidly changing educational and clinical environments. These themes serve to provide structure to the sequence of coursework, emphasize the values of the profession, the institution and the faculty, and to provide students with a consistent reminder to view each client in a holistic manner. These themes are:

Occupation Focused Practice

Features of occupation focused practice include the ability to collaboratively determine the meaning and purpose of an individual's occupational profile, identify needs and priorities, and construct a plan of motivating therapeutic activities. This process, infused with occupations, reflects best practice and results in a more meaningful lifestyle. Our curriculum is developed to foster an understanding and appreciation of:

1. the role of occupation throughout the lifespan
2. how occupation is used as a means and an end in occupational therapy practice
3. the value of occupation based assessment and intervention
4. how the focus on occupational performance improves therapeutic outcomes

Evidence Based Practice

Evidence based practice is a collaborative process between therapist and client in which the best available research evidence, in combination with the therapist's clinical experience, is reviewed

to determine the most appropriate therapeutic options that support the client's occupational goals. Essential to this is the therapist's ability to develop and apply data collection and analysis processes throughout the intervention sequence that support the attainment of documented outcomes.

Community Leadership
Community initiatives help to increase access to occupational therapy services for all individuals, groups and populations, especially those underserved. We prepare students to work in emerging practice areas, primary care and community settings as well as traditional settings. We desire to instill in our students leadership characteristics for advocacy in the community, including an entrepreneurial spirit, skilled interprofessional collaboration and the ability to identify and attain funding resources to support effective programming.

Dynamic Clinical Reasoning
In addition to the three content related themes described above, we have chosen to incorporate an organizing theme, Dynamic Clinical Reasoning. This theme emphasizes the necessity to apply a systematic clinical reasoning process when considering the interactions of the individual, the context and the environment in the context of the therapeutic relationship.

These themes serve to provide structure to the sequence of coursework, reinforce the terminology and the stated purview of the profession, and provide students with a consistent reminder to take a holistic view at each of our clients.

Curriculum Sequence

In order to meet our curricular goals, the sequence of coursework is delivered using a progressive approach. This sequence covers six areas: Liberal Arts & Foundational Knowledge, Individual Development and Occupation, Professional & Community Initiatives, Clinical Performance, Reasoning & Application, Research & EBP: Strengthening our Knowledge Base and Advanced Skill Development. The six interwoven sequences of education are described in more detail below.

Sequence I Liberal Arts and Foundational Knowledge

Students establish the foundation of knowledge through the completion of all liberal arts core courses such as prerequisite courses **PHY 117 Physics, BIO 211/212 Anatomy and Physiology I & II** and **MTH 115 Basic Statistics** followed by **OS 301 Applied Functional Anatomy** and **OS 302 Applied Neuroscience**. The science foundation provides a basis for clinical expertise regarding knowledge of body structures and functions. The liberal arts provide a broad foundation upon which to build the student's professional education. Required courses in **PSY 123 Psychology** and **PSY 290 Psychopathology** provide a further basis from which the student can begin to understand the interaction between the individual, their environment, and occupation.

Sequence II Individual Development and Occupation

OS 305 Introduction to Occupational Science and **OS 304 Conceptual Foundations** introduces the students to the many models and frames of reference that may be used to guide the development of a comprehensive and holistic approach to the client. Students are introduced to the concepts of human growth and development in **OS 303 Occupational Development Throughout the Lifespan** where the students review the theories and analysis of occupations from the perspective of self and others. In order to enhance the student's' study of occupations, the **OT 805 Advanced Occupational Science and Theoretical Application** encourages students to further their knowledge of evidenced based research supporting the use of occupations in therapeutic intervention.

Sequence III Professional and Community Initiatives

Students learn the importance of developing professional behaviors and the application of these behaviors to develop individual therapeutic relationships and leadership skills in the community in the **Seminar Series (I Professional Behaviors, II Occupations, III Professional Writing, IV Pre fieldwork and Cultural Competence)**. Professional Behaviors are introduced in **OS 305 Introduction to Occupational Science and OS 304 Conceptual Foundations**, where broad issues about the profession, such as its standards, ethics and vision for the future are discussed. The **OS 405 Community Based Practice** and **OT 539 Contemporary and Emerging Intervention** courses provide less structured opportunities for students to create occupational opportunities and to take an active role in the development of their learning. **OT 538 Management and Supervision** assists the student in acquiring the management and supervisor skills necessary in many of today's practice environments, as well as the leadership capacities for entrepreneurial work. **OT 543 Occupational Therapy Issues and Trends**, as a culminating course, requires students to investigate the professional concepts and ideals in the profession that will challenge and motivate them as they enter into practice as entry level therapists. Through didactic and problem based learning, students explore program assessment tools, complete needs

assessment and gain knowledge regarding business plans through the course called **OT 657 Program Development and Grant Writing. OT 544 Exam Prep** allows students to prepare for the NBCOT professional examination through sample testing scenarios and generation of skill and topic specific studying plans.

Sequence IV Clinical Performance, Reasoning and Application

The development of clinical skills begins in **OS 407 Clinical Reasoning and Conditions** and **OS 401 Occupational Performance Analysis** where students acquire general competencies in conducting an occupation centered evaluation and assessment process and attain the entry-level clinical skills that are required to progress through the intervention series in upcoming semesters. Within the **OS 307 Environment and Context** course, students learn how to assess the client's environment and to change the context to enhance the occupational performance of the individual. The **Intervention Series (OS 308 Interpersonal Process and Group Dynamics across the Lifespan, OT 534 Adult Intervention, OT 535 Geriatric Intervention, OT 540 Pediatric Intervention)** provide the students with opportunities to integrate prior levels of learning to construct intervention for a variety of clients with an occupation and evidence based approach derived from theoretical principles. The final application of this sequence occurs during the student's **Level I/II FW** and **OT 802 Doctoral Capstone Experiences.**

Sequence V Research and EBP – Strengthening our Knowledge Base

While basic bibliographic, search and information literacy are introduced early throughout the curriculum, the essence of the research series begins in **OS 306 Research Design** and **OT 790 Clinical Outcomes** where students learn about qualitative and quantitative research designs, grants, and the research process. **OS 403 Evidence Based Practice** addresses the evidence based practice component, where students complete an individual EBP review throughout the semester. **OT 606 Intro to Doctoral Professionalism and Scholarship Seminar, OT 756 Capstone I:Project Proposal, OT 803 Capstone 2: Preparation, OT 804 Capstone 3: Project Management of Implementation, and OT 802 Doctoral Capstone Experiential Component** requires students to develop a research proposal from start to finish, design a study, collect data, and analyze and present results.

Sequence VI Advanced Skill Development

The courses in this sequence are meant to provide the student with a means to develop into a professional beyond that of the generalist entry level therapist. This coursework will assist the student to assume the roles of researcher, educator, and leader. Students are exposed to evidenced based clinical measurements in the and **OT 790 Clinical Outcomes** coursework as these are key components of today's quality health care environment. In the **Capstone I, II, III** courses, students advance previously developed skills in clinical reasoning, critical analysis, and competences within specialized areas of practice. The **OT 802 Doctoral Capstone Experiential** Component allows the student to refine skills beyond the generalist level and engage in an in depth activity in a specific area (clinical practice skills, research skills, administration,leadership, program/policy development, advocacy, education, or theory development). Students will evaluate the current state and federal public policy issues as to the extent of influence these regulations have on service delivery, while incorporating advanced advocacy and leadership skills in the **OT 780 Public Policy and Advocacy** coursework. **OT 801IPE and Leadership**

course envelops the importance of interprofessional practice and encourages students to be leaders in the profession. The importance and dissemination of scholarly work is presented in the **OT 851 Presentation, Publication & Knowledge Translation** course. The **OT 608 Curriculum Development and Instructional Strategies** course will also allow students to construct curricular objectives and explore various teaching practices to be incorporated within the professional academic environment.

*** **ELECTIVE** courses allow the student to target their interests for individual enhancement of knowledge in a specific area of practice.