Greetings from Dr. Lorie Richards

Hello from the University of Utah Department of Occupational and Recreational Therapies. There has been a great deal of change within the Division and the College of Health and many new and exciting things are happening. There has been a realignment at a college level and now the College of Health has 5 departments instead of seven.

There are many potential benefits of the realignment. In addition there will be the potential to create more efficient education programs by combining classes that were similar and previously taught by several areas. The realignment will create additional opportunities for interprofessional education as well as a greater potential for collaborative research. For occupational therapy that means that we are now the Department of Occupational and Recreational therapies.

We are excited about the positive impacts that this change will bring to the department. There will now be a nationally known Reactional Therapy program undergraduate major in the department which makes us larger and more visible on campus and nationwide. The combination of these two programs is a natural fit because they originally started as they same profession but gradually split off as separate professions between the 1930’s-1950’s. Both programs have core philosophies that to be healthy requires a satisfactory repertoire of engagement in healthy, meaningful activities and that such activities can be used therapeutically to build skills.

The entry level MOT and postprofessional programs will continue to be coordinated by an OT program director. The RT program will be coordinated by an RT program director.
Congratulations to Professor Pollie Price

Pollie Price was inducted into the AOTA Roster of Fellows at the 2016 AOTA Annual Conference and Expo in Chicago in April.

Dr. Price and Sheama Krishnagiri (Private Practice, Education Consultant, Los Angeles, CA) attended the 2016 COTEC-ENOTHE Congress (Connecting Education/Research/Practice/Policy) in Galway, Ireland June 15-19. They conducted a workshop: “Range of Instructional Methods for Teaching the Concept of Occupation”, on behalf of their research team: Barbara Hooper (PI – CSU), Andrea Bilics (Worcester State University), and Steve Taff (WashU). The workshop was well received. The team has been invited to submit an opinion paper on the state of teaching the concept of occupation in occupational therapy curriculum in the U.S. for the Journal of Occupational Science. This team has completed two phases of a multi-phase, multi-method national study on how occupation is addressed in curricula in the U.S.

Dr. Price was an invited keynote and panel speaker for the Taiwan Occupational Science Symposium in Taipei this past November-December. She was sought for her expertise and research on occupation-based practice. For the past 18 years, Dr. Price has been conducting research on how occupation emerges in the practices of occupational therapists across settings and populations. During this speaking tour, Dr. Price conducted a full-day workshop on occupation-based practice at the Taiwan Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference. She then traveled through the island to speak to occupational therapy and medical students at I-Shou University in Kaoshiung, National Cheng-Kung University in Tainan, and Taichung Medical University in Taichung.

Cordelia Myers AJOT Best Article Award

Anne Kirby, an assistant professor in the division, was awarded the Cordelia Myers AJOT Best Article Award at the 2016 American Occupational Therapy Association conference in Chicago, IL. The Cordelia Myers award recognizes outstanding professional writing in the American Journal of Occupational Therapy and is awarded for one article published in the journal per year. Dr. Kirby's article, titled "Observational Characterization of Sensory Interests, Repetitions, and Seeking Behaviors,” appeared in the May/June 2015 issue of the journal (http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2015.015081). Written in collaboration with colleagues at the University of North Carolina and the University of Kansas, this paper explored unusual sensory seeking behaviors in children with autism, developmental disabilities, and typical development using video-recorded testing sessions. The findings suggested children with autism and developmental disabilities both engaged in unusual sensory seeking behaviors, but that children with autism were displaying much more complex behaviors. As part of a larger body of research, the findings of this study can contribute to advances in autism diagnosis and treatment.

Dr. Kirby was also recently featured on a Scope radio interview which can be found at this link: http://healthcare.utah.edu/thescope/shows.php?shows=o_owny2n8m
**FieldWork Corner**

*What are the real benefits of taking a level II fieldwork student?*

Researchers in Occupational Therapy (OT) are starting to recognize the dearth of literature examining fieldwork education and more evidence is being generated to address this deficit. Several studies have been published recently about the benefits and drawbacks of providing clinical education for Level II students. One such study by Thomas, Dickson, Broadbridge, Hopper, Hawkins, Edwards, and McBryde (AOTJ, 2007) states that participants reported the top 5 benefits of educating level II students include recruitment of future employees and/or future fieldwork students, professional development for the FW educator, fulfillment of a professional responsibility, and student provision of projects and resources that benefit the fieldwork site or the fieldwork educator. Having visited with many OT’s over the years who are interested in or have taken level II fieldwork students, I have a great deal of anecdotal evidence to support these researchers findings. The University of Utah, Department of Occupational and Recreational Therapy places approximately 68 level II students per year and we are very dedicated to preparing our students for learning in a clinical environment in addition to ensuring that FW educators are prepared for their role as an extension of the academic faculty.

---

**Occupational Science Symposium**

*Inclusion and Participation in Auckland, NZ*

This poster provided information about a study of Karen youth, whose families are from Burma, who participate in traditional Karen dance. The focus is on personal perceptions of the meaning of this occupation to these youth and its relation to individual and collective identity construction and social engagement with their own and external communities. Yda and Ellen are producing a film about the Karen youth dancers that includes 10 semi-structured interviews with the dancers and others involved in the group as well as footage of their traditional dance performances. Qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed using a grounded theory approach.

Results suggest that these teens, who have spent half their lives in the US, are highly invested in maintaining their social engagement with their Karen community, Karen identity maintenance, educating the public about the Karen culture, and passing this sense of identity along with cultural traditions to the next generation.
Life Skills Clinic Updates

The Occupational Therapy Life Skills Clinic is a professional teaching/learning clinic which is part of the Department of Occupational and Recreational Therapies at the University of Utah. The clinic offers a unique combination of quality intervention services, comprehensive evidence-based clinical training, and innovative research opportunities to help clients and their families in our community reach their life goals. Our philosophy is to effectively balance our priorities of providing service to the community, educating and training students, and promoting research in the field of Occupational Therapy within a revenue-generating business model.

The Life Skills Clinic has grown steadily over the last few years, with a 62% increase in revenue over the past year alone. This increase in revenue reflects the dedication of the clinic staff and therapists to providing quality services and seeking innovative opportunities that benefit both the community and the clinic. This past fall, we implemented a teaching/learning community program within the MOT pediatric curriculum. Under supervision of a licensed therapist, students get valuable, hands-on experiences planning and implementing treatment plans and completing documentation for their client, simultaneously putting into practice theory and education through evidence-based interventions. This program received tremendously positive feedback from parents, clients, students, and therapists and will continue in subsequent pediatric semesters.

This summer was the busiest summer the clinic has ever seen. We were able to keep a diverse caseload of individual clients as well as offering and filling over 8 successful groups for children with handwriting, sensory, feeding, and social needs. In a new and exciting partnership with the Melisa Nellesen Center for Autism at Utah Valley University, summer groups were provided in Utah County as well as at the clinic. Clients and therapists alike loved exploring dinosaurs and oceans with all their senses in Sensory Scientists, visiting the zoo and museums while learning social behaviors during Out and About, creating artwork and playing games with food in Kids in the Kitchen, using yoga and movement to have fun, build strength, and enhance body awareness in Movement Monkeys, exploring music and self-regulation in Music in Motion, and finding out how much fun handwriting can be in Handwriting Rockstars! We annexed Blue Sky Therapy in Park City as a new satellite clinic which will provide additional therapy services to meet the growing needs of the Park City community. We continue to provide school services to charter schools throughout Salt Lake and Utah counties.

As we continue to grow and pursue innovative and effective programming, we are expanding our staff to include another full-time OT and COTA. This growth necessitates increased clinic space and we are finalizing plans for a new clinic that will be located just a block away from our current location and is located with the Speech Clinic. We are excited about the opportunities this move will provide for interdisciplinary services, increased individual and group services to a broader variety of clients. This exciting move is anticipated for summer 2017.
The initial search for OT schools is overwhelming, to say the least. I recall as an undergrad feeling conflicted about which programs to apply for, and what was truly important to me in a program. So many times during my research I would plead to the worldwide web to give me a resource that would open my eyes to what graduate school would look like. I desperately wanted to talk with a current student and have all my questions answered. After many hours of research and stressful conversations, I figured out what I was looking for.

Ultimately, I decided to stay in my home state and continue my education at the U. I promised myself that once I was on the other side of admissions, I would provide a firsthand account for future students. I wanted to depict the “daily life of an OT student” and answer all the questions I had as an undergrad.

This was the catalyst for my blog, The Occupassionist. I wanted to document my experiences in graduate school in the hopes that future OTs would find it helpful. Also, I love to write, so it was truly a win-win situation. Blogging has provided a virtual space for me to call my own. It has been fun to track my experience and see what areas of OT I have grown in, and what I still need to learn. Looking back at what I have written helps rekindle my fire for the profession on days when I’m stressed, or motivation is lacking. It provides perspective, with each post, I find a reminder that I am exactly where I want to be.