

Master of Occupational
Therapy
Program Newsletter

Idaho State
UNIVERSITY

Spring 2009 • Department of Physical and Occupational Therapy



Economy's Impact
Fieldwork Educators
Program Accreditation

Letter from the Director

The recent downturn in the economies of the United States and the world continues to be a concern for most Americans. In these uncertain times, it is not always clear if one's profession will be able to weather this financial storm. However, there seems to be a silver lining for individuals that have pursued careers in the health-related professions. Notably, occupational therapy has



been identified by U.S. News & World Report as one of the best careers for 2009, the second consecutive year our profession has received this honor. Furthermore, occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants may breathe a sigh of relief as our jobs have been classified as "recession-proof" by Laurence Shatkin in his recent book, "150 Best Recession Proof Jobs" (2008). It is fortunate

that a profession such as ours, that enables full life participation, will remain strong and viable in the coming years.

The Occupational Therapy program at Idaho State University is well positioned to provide well-trained occupational therapists to meet our region's occupational needs. Presently, a full contingent of dedicated doctoral-level faculty form the core of the ISU OT program, serving as Idaho's sole provider of graduate-level occupational therapy education.

Our graduates continue to maintain a pass rate of 100 percent as first-time test takers of the NBCOT examination; while the national average hovers around 86 percent. The ISU OT program faculty are becoming recognized regionally, nationally and internationally for their scholarship and dedication to the profession of occupation therapy.

Despite the tenuous economic times, the OT program at ISU continues its deep commitment to our regional communities. It is exciting to report that applications to our program have been on the rise over the past year. Whether this is due to the increased need for practicing occupational therapists in Idaho, or the ongoing acknowledgement of the capacity of our program to graduate top-notch students, is not fully clear. What is becoming evident is that a greater number of students are seeking a degree in occupational therapy from ISU. This trend is anticipated to continue, and our faculty are eager to enhance our educational offerings to our community. We have offered a continuing education opportunity for occupational therapists interested in enhancing their skills as fieldwork educators. Also, in collaboration with the Idaho Occupational Therapy Association, we will provide a day-long continuing education workshop for southeast Idaho's occupational therapists. Join us as we strive to enhance the quality of life for all people.

Aaron M. Eakman, Ph.D., OTR/L

By the Water Cooler

Here's the recent dish on some of our alumni:

Amy Willis (2006) is getting married in June 09 to Justin Mai – Amanda (Mengel) Smith (2006) will be a bridesmaid. Amy has also been promoted to rehabilitation manager at work. Congrats.

Gina (Peila) Pullen (2007) was married to Samuel Pullen last September. She is working at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

Sarah Murphey (2007) is living and working outside the DC area but is hoping to hop the big pond to work as an OT in London. We hope she will have a jolly good time.

Lacey Osgood (2003) is president-elect to the Idaho Occupational Therapy Association. Congrats. We look forward to your leadership.

Please send us any news or announcements. We love to hear from our graduates.

The faculty of the ISU Occupational Therapy program wishes to thank the following individuals for their support during our accreditation process: Stephen Adkison, Ph.D., Linda Hatzenbuehler, Ph.D., Cindy Seiger, PT, Ph.D., Ken Rodnick, Ph.D., Curt Anderson, Ph.D., Jim Groome, Ph.D., Alex Urfer, PT, Ph.D., Dr. Deanna Dye, PT, Ph.D., Corwin Sutherin, MS, OTR/L, Loriann Helgeson, MA, OTR/L, Cheri Strand, OTR/L, CHT, Ivan Hardcastle, MOT, OTR/L, KC Austin, MOT, OTR/L, Gina Peila Pullen, MOT, OTR/L, Tonja Brown, MOT, OTR/L, Sarah Mennear, MOTS, Rachel West, MOTS, Emily Guerrero, MOTS, Tia Burns, MOTS, Kathryn Peet, MOTS, Jacob Schofield, MOTS, Craig Adams, OTR/L, Patty Chambers, OTR/L, Shawn Hepworth, OTR/L, Kris Jaques, OTR/L, Ferrell Lindley, MOT, OTR/L, Tamara Trenry, OTR/L, Jan Yingst, MPT, Erika Myasako, MOTS, Holly St. John, MOTS, Nicolas Zohner, MOTS, Jessica Croner, Perry Lords, Aaron Pierce, Holly Ridgway, Allison Roberts, Jennifer Schiess, Suzy Stokes, Natalie Tanner, and Joel Vinson.

Rough Economy Forces Responses by Master of Occupational Therapy Program

Reducing expenses while maintaining the quality of the educational experience for Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program students is the challenge faced by the program in these rough economic times, according to Dr. Aaron Eakman, director of the Idaho State University MOT program. State revenue downturns have affected education as a whole, both K-12 and higher education, and the university has asked all departments and programs to be ready to cut the state budget for the 2009-2010 academic year by up to 12 percent. "We've had to tighten our belts," Dr. Eakman said.

While the salary lines for all full-time faculty members in next year's budget have been maintained, nearly every other account has seen large decreases. One example of these cuts is travel for the academic fieldwork coordinator who will now rely more heavily on telephone and e-mail contact with fieldwork students, and reserve trips to the fieldwork sites for situations when problems or other exceptional circumstances arise. Additionally, a review of professional journal subscriptions has been conducted to reduce library expenses while assuring that access to information via online sources can be maintained.

While state funds will be decreased, Dr. Alex Urfer, chair of the Department of Physical and Occupational Therapy, takes some comfort in the fact that the department is lucky enough to have some accounts that contain money that is not under state control. These funds include money paid by students in professional fees for the physical therapy and occupational therapy programs and various

funds contributed to the department, which continue under the department's control. Some of the cuts in the state funds can be absorbed into these local accounts; however, Dr. Urfer notes that there is some apprehension in shifting basic educational expenses (such as personnel costs) from what were considered to be stable state accounts to more volatile local accounts.

Dr. Urfer notes that, in addition to budget cuts, efforts to enhance department revenues are being undertaken. These include expanding patients seen in the department's clinics and seeking to hire a graduate assistant who can aid with clinic expansion and assist faculty in grant-seeking activities.

And in an optimistic vein, Dr. Eakman notes that admissions to the MOT program are trending upward, perhaps due to occupational therapy's status as a "recession-proof" profession. "Even in these hard economic times," he said, "health professions, particularly occupational therapy, continue to have excellent employment outlooks." Increased admissions would bring increased professional fees to the program, helping to mitigate the state cuts.

Despite the difficult times, Dr. Eakman remains confident in the program's future noting that, because Idaho State has the health care mission for the state, the program can count on the support of both the university and of its Kasiska College of Health Professions.

Echoing this optimism, Dr. Urfer sees the value of being forced to review curricula and consider whether certain courses could be consolidated. "This is do-able," he said, "and in the long run, it will help us to be a better, more efficient department."

Arthur Lloyd, Ph.D. and Marcia Lloyd, Ed.D. Pocatello, Idaho

The Occupational Therapy program wishes to thank Drs. Arthur and Marcia Lloyd for their kind generosity. They created a legacy to honor their son A. J. Lloyd, who passed away in 2004. Arthur and Marcia served Idaho State University for many years, Arthur for 35 and Marcia for 25. Arthur served as department chair of counseling from 1968 to 1998. Marcia was instrumental in developing the dance program. Now retired from ISU, the Lloyds spend much of their time traveling the world, but maintain Pocatello as their home base. A. J. graduated from ISU in 1990, with high honors, earning a BS in biology and minors in political science and



anthropology. He went on to become a member of the first graduating class of the Occupational Therapy program at ISU and earned his Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) degree in 2001. A. J. will always be remembered because of this lasting tribute in his memory.

Fieldwork Educators Essential Component of MOT Education

Fieldwork educators are the people who bring everything together to make MOT students' clinical affiliations "the capstone of their overall education" according to Dr. Bryan Gee, academic fieldwork coordinator for the ISU Master of Occupational Therapy program. "They are the glue that makes for a meaningful graduate," said Dr. Gee.

The therapists that supervise students during their clinical affiliations are "essential to the success of the program," agreed Dr. Aaron Eakman, director of the MOT program, who noted that supervisors at all levels (part-time practicum experiences as well as short-term level I and longer-term level II placements) are all appreciated immensely by the program. This success, noted Dr. Gee, includes the program's 100 percent NBCOT examination pass rate and the praise for the competency and maturity of MOT graduates received from the recent ACOTE accreditation team. While he sees the classroom portion of the program as an important factor in these successes, he stated that the fieldwork educators are the ones who build crucial critical reasoning skills in the students and who transform them into entry-level practitioners.

The process of applying knowledge gained through classroom preparation to actual clinical situations is an "essential component" of the educational program, according to Dr. Alex Urfer, chair of the Department of Physical and Occupational Therapy, who notes that the MOT program has been established long enough now that it is frequently placing students under the supervision of ISU graduates. Since the program's inception in 1997, Dr. Urfer has seen the fieldwork component grow from 10 clinical sites to its present 120. He notes that Dr. Gee, as the fourth academic fieldwork coordinator in the program's history, "has done a yeoman's job" of organizing and developing the clinical component.

This development has come despite factors making it more difficult for some facilities to accept fieldwork students. One of these factors is recent changes in national standards that require fieldwork educators to have knowledge of the MOT program's curricular themes, values, and goals and to carry those from the academic settings into their clinical settings. Another factor is the increasing emphasis on therapist

productivity that has made some employers reluctant to allow their therapists to take the time necessary to supervise students.

Dr. Gee notes that, although therapists' motivation to supervise students comes mainly from a desire to contribute to the profession and to help shape the next generation of practitioners, being a fieldwork educator does not have to be done at a financial loss to their facilities. Because students operate fairly independently over the last few weeks of their fieldwork experiences, both the student and the supervisor are able to carry their own case loads, making up for the early weeks when the fieldwork educator had to take time away from patient care to supervise the student.

Additionally, the university offers affiliate faculty status to fieldwork educators giving them access

Fieldwork Supervisors Are Eligible for Affiliate Faculty Status

Benefits:

- Enjoy library circulation privileges equivalent to those received by other university faculty.
- A general parking permit for use by the affiliate faculty member only, at no charge.
- Use of the ISU Computer Center and all microcomputer laboratories for University business at no charge.
- Access to Reed Gymnasium and associated recreational facilities (ID card required).
- Total fitness appraisals and supervised wellness programming (fees may apply).
- Access to most physical education activity classes (scuba, karate, dance, etc.) at normal faculty fee rate.
- Listing in appropriate publications of the University
- Receipt of a certificate of acknowledgment.

For more information or to apply, contact Bryan Gee at geebrya@isu.edu or (208) 282-3629.

to the resources of the ISU library for information contributing to their ability to engage in evidence-based practice. Affiliate faculty status was something that used to be offered to experienced fieldwork educators as a reward for their contributions to the program; however, the program has now expanded so that it is available to therapists who sign up as fieldwork educators even before they accept a student. Dr. Gee stated that this change was made to enable these new fieldwork educators to have access to materials that would help them to strengthen the evidence-base of their own practices before taking on a student.

"I wish we could do more to show our appreciation for the fieldwork educators", said Dr. Gee. "We couldn't do it without them—they are so valuable to us."



Dr. Bryan Gee welcomes attendees.



Initial Fieldwork Educator's Conference Held

Reinforcing the connection between academic instruction and fieldwork experiences was a basic goal of the fieldwork educators conference held March 14 at ISU. Fieldwork educators were invited to learn about the Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program's curricular themes and ways that those themes can be carried out during students' fieldwork experiences.

In addition to information about the curricular themes, faculty from ISU's MOT program presented brief educational sessions regarding site-specific fieldwork objectives, ways to address psychosocial needs during fieldwork, and supervision strategies for fieldwork students. Time for lunch and networking was also provided and PDU certificates were available for those therapists attending.

Fieldwork educators (left to right)
Greg Hepworth and Todd Williams

Loan Repayment Benefits through the Higher Education Opportunity Act

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) has been actively engaged in our nation's legislative process. One of the most recent victories came in the form of a \$10,000 loan forgiveness opportunity for health-related professions, including occupational therapy. On August 14, 2008, Public Law No: 110-315 was established after passing in both the U.S. Senate and House. According to the AOTA, this bill improves upon the existing federal higher education law by allowing occupational therapists working with children, adolescents and veterans to be eligible for government-sponsored

loan repayments. The provision found in Section 430 of this bill authorizes loan forgiveness of up to \$2,000 per year for up to five years of employment for persons working with children, adolescents and veterans.

Though specific application and payment details have yet to be disseminated, interested occupational therapists can go to the AOTA Web site for more information: <http://www.aota.org/Students/Aid.aspx>. Specific details on the bill also may be found by going to: http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2008_07_29_E/KOS08400_xml.pdf.

ISU Student Awarded National Scholarship

Heather Corbet, a third-year Master of Occupational Therapy student, was one of three women selected in a national competition to receive the initial annual E.K. Wise scholarship awarded by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). The scholarship is awarded with the intention of supporting development of women who can meet society's diverse occupational needs in underserved areas or communities.

In order to win the award, Heather demonstrated a sustained record of outstanding academic achievement, leadership and community service, and membership in AOTA. The awards are granted annually, in the amount of \$5,000, to three female students pursuing a post-baccalaureate, entry-level program in occupational therapy.



Heather Corbet

Idaho State University
Pocatello, Idaho



Amy Losier

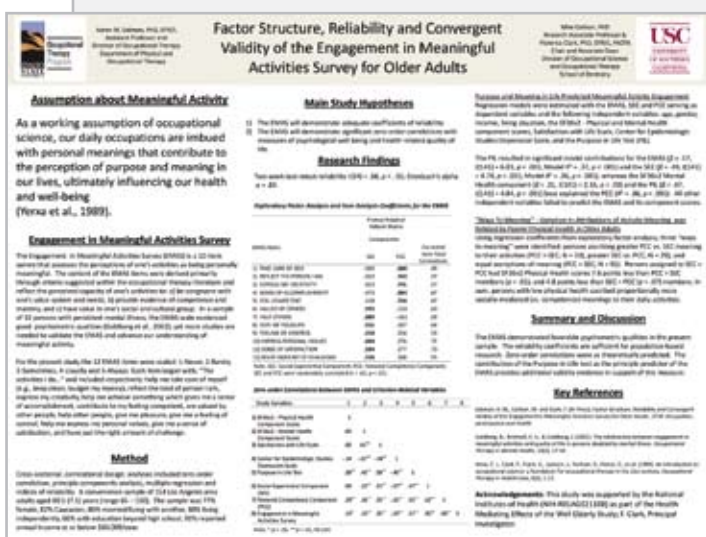
Florida Gulf Coast University
Fort Myers, Florida



Yaffa Yousefaleh

Long Island University-Brooklyn
Brooklyn, New York

Leading the Way, by Educating



All four full-time faculty members of the MOT program had presentations accepted for the annual AOTA conference in Houston.

Aaron Eakman, Ph.D., OTR/L

Poster presentation: "Factor Structure, Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Engagement in Meaningful Activities Survey for Older Adults"

Bryan Gee, OTD, OTR/L

Poster presentation: "Exploring Native American Preschool Children's Toy and Play Routine Preferences"

Ted Peterson, DrOT, OTR/L

Poster presentation: "Infusion of Occupation-based Principles in Acute Rehabilitation for Stroke Survivors"

Kelly Thompson, EdD, OTR/L

Research paper presentation: "The Post-Professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy Degree: Implications for Education, Practice, and the Future of the Profession"

Student Occupational Therapy Association 2008-09 School Year

The Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) had a very successful year.

For Occupational Therapy Month in April, SOTA was very involved! The club did a raffle as a fundraiser. Each day of the month in April a prize was raffled, ranging from free tans to restaurant gift certificates. Prizes were donated by local businesses and collated by SOTA members.

As a second fundraiser, SOTA members also cleaned Garrison Hall. To prepare the facility for accreditation, which occurred in April, several projects needed to be completed. A list of tasks was prepared by OT faculty; and SOTA members met as a



SOTA members participate in Garrison Building cleanup.

group to accomplish the things needing to be done. Pizza was also delivered to make the evening a sure success!

To promote occupational therapy in the community and provide education to children, two second-year students were able to be involved with backpack awareness. This presentation given to elementary school children explains the importance of wearing backpacks correctly. The SOTA members involved had a great experience and the elementary students were able to learn the importance of properly wearing a backpack.

SOTA is excited about the things accomplished in the 2008-09 year and is looking forward to success in the future.



Officers: Jennifer Schiess, Erica Miyasako, Holly St. John

A warm thank you to the following,
for their vision and generosity on behalf
of the Occupational Therapy Program.

Shari Tayar

Drs. Arthur and Marcia Lloyd

Dana Howell

Annice Baldwin

For questions regarding your gift to
the ISU Occupational Therapy program,
please contact Joan Streeper Hansen at
(208) 282-4292 or hansjoan@isu.edu.

ACOTE Accreditation Team Visits MOT Program

The accreditation of the Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program at Idaho State University will be extended according to members of the on-site accreditation team that visited the ISU program April 1-3, 2009. Although the official notice of re-accreditation and the length of the accreditation period granted will not be known until review by the full Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE), the on-site accreditation team praised the program as a "collaborative, integrated program" that is in substantial compliance with accreditation standards.

The on-site visit provides the accreditation team a "glimpse" of the program, according to Dr. Alex Urfer, chair of the Department of Physical and Occupational Therapy, and gives the program an opportunity to present itself in the best light. Additionally, according to Dr. Urfer, the visit provides a learning opportunity by which information from the outside world is made available for improving the program.

The visit of the on-site accreditation team was

the culmination of a process that began a year ago when the faculty began an intensive review of the program's curriculum and administrative procedures, according to Dr. Aaron Eakman, director of the MOT program. This review resulted in a 536-page self-study document that was sent to ACOTE for paper review before the on-site visit. Both Dr. Eakman and Dr. Bryan Gee, as well as Dr. Kelly Thompson attended educational programs to learn how to conduct the self-study and how to demonstrate compliance with ACOTE standards. Work on the self-study became an intense focus for all the faculty members, who met 2-to-4 times monthly to review documents and plan for the study's completion.

Final action regarding the re-accreditation of the MOT program will be taken by ACOTE based on the review of the self-study and the report of the on-site team.

ACOTE, as the accreditation body of the American Occupational Therapy Association, accredits approximately 275 occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant educational programs and is recognized and fully compliant with all requirements of both the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).