

## Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

### MEMO

**To:** The UVM Faculty Senate  
**From:** Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Laura Almstead, Chair  
**Date:** November 5, 2020  
**Re:** Approval of a proposal for a new Entry-Level Doctorate in Occupational Therapy from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences in conjunction with the Graduate College

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On November 5, 2020, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

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The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal for a new Entry-Level Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (OTD) from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CNHS) Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Science in conjunction with the Graduate College. If approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees, the anticipated start date is fall 2022. The program is in line for accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®). Note that the newly proposed Entry-Level OTD is a reinvestment of the energy and resources intended for the Post-Professional Doctorate of Occupational Therapy approved in January 2020. A proposal to deactivate the Post-Professional OTD was submitted in parallel with the proposal for the new Entry-Level OTD.

#### ***Program Description***

The proposed Entry-Level OTD is designed to train students interested in becoming practicing, licensed occupational therapists. It takes an innovative approach, incorporating hybrid courses, interprofessional learning, and experiential learning opportunities with the goal of producing occupational therapists who are rooted in science, creative thinkers, leaders, and scholars. The inclusion of some online components also provides more flexibility than fully in-person programs. An EAB market analysis indicated incorporating online components into the curriculum is desirable for adult learners, as flexibility is a consistent variable considered when deciding on a graduate program. All faculty teaching in the proposed program will be required to complete the Teaching Effectively Online course offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning so they are prepared to deliver the hybrid curriculum. Students who successfully complete the proposed entry-level OTD will be eligible to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) exam.

As noted previously, the proposed program will be accredited, and thus the curriculum was designed to meet the standards of the accreditation body, ACOTE. To demonstrate competencies, students will successfully complete all coursework and all fieldwork experiences, and successfully prepare and present a scholarly capstone project (see Curriculum section for details). Graduates of ACOTE-accredited doctoral-level occupational therapy programs must:

- Have acquired, as a foundation for professional study, a breadth and depth of knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences and an understanding of issues related to diversity.
- Be educated as a generalist with a broad exposure to the delivery models and systems used in settings where occupational therapy is currently practiced and where it is emerging as a service.
- Have achieved entry-level competence through a combination of didactic, fieldwork, and capstone education.
- Be prepared to evaluate and choose appropriate theory to inform practice.
- Be prepared to articulate and apply occupational therapy theory through evidence-based evaluations and interventions to achieve expected outcomes as related to occupation.
- Be prepared to articulate and apply therapeutic use of occupations with persons, groups, and populations for the purpose of facilitating performance and participation in activities, occupations, and roles and situations in home, school, workplace, community, and other settings, as informed by the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework.
- Be able to plan and apply evidence-based occupational therapy interventions to address the physical, cognitive, functional cognitive, psychosocial, sensory, and other aspects of performance in a variety of contexts and environments to support engagement in everyday life activities that affect health, well-being, and quality of life, as informed by the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework.
- Be prepared to be a lifelong learner to keep current with evidence-based professional practice.
- Uphold the ethical standards, values, and attitudes of the occupational therapy profession.
- Understand the distinct roles and responsibilities of the occupational therapist and the occupational therapy assistant in the supervisory process for service delivery.
- Be prepared to effectively collaborate with and supervise occupational therapy assistants in service delivery.
- Be prepared to effectively communicate and work interprofessionally with all who provide services and program persons, groups, and populations.
- Be prepared to advocate as a professional for access to occupational therapy services offered and for the recipients of those services.
- Be prepared to be an effective consumer of the latest research and knowledge bases that support occupational therapy practice and contribute to the growth and dissemination of research and knowledge.
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of delivery models, policies, and systems related to practice in settings where occupational therapy is currently practiced and settings where it is emerging.
- Demonstrate active involvement in professional development, leadership, and advocacy.
- Demonstrate the ability to synthesize in-depth knowledge in a practice area through the development and completion of a doctoral capstone in one or more of the following areas: clinical practice skills, research skills, administration, leadership, program and policy development, advocacy, education, and theory development.

In addition to the ACOTE standards, the proposal included three curricular goals with specific outcomes, which are listed below. Development of these goals was guided by The American Occupational Therapy Association's 2025 Vision statement and the mission of CNHS. Specific curricular threads were identified for each goal, and are addressed in multiple courses each semester.

- *Curricular Goal 1: Develop innovative and effective, occupation-based and evidence-based practitioners*

Demonstrate the ability to critique, synthesize, and integrate science and technology into the art and practice of occupational therapy to enhance occupational performance for all clients.

- Basic science – Students will demonstrate the ability to link basic science concepts throughout a variety of clinical scenarios to justify various treatment approaches.
- Evidence-based practice – Students will develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they explore translating knowledge into evidence-based practice and occupation-based, client-centered care.
- Innovation – Students will learn to explore client solutions by incorporating innovative, creative thinking principles to real-world issues that limit desired participation, whether it is due to physical, cultural, cognitive, or societal barriers.

- *Curricular Goal 2: Develop leaders and advocates*

Articulate the complexities of issues affecting health, wellness, and quality of life, and lead and advocate for the benefits of occupational satisfaction for individuals, communities, and society.

- Leadership: Students will recognize their leadership strengths and challenges, and learn how to maximize their skills to advocate for all clients and for the profession.

- *Curricular Goal 3: Develop compassionate, inclusive, and collaborative practitioners*

Recognize therapeutic use of self, and capitalize on strengths while embracing challenges to become a compassionate practitioner who is collaborative with professionals and clients across all sectors of healthcare and society, recognizing accessibility, equity and diversity needs.

- Compassion: Students will explore their own therapeutic use of self in various settings as they recognize how their own strengths and challenges can be used when working with clients to achieve maximum therapeutic potential.
- Interprofessional: Students will collaborate with professionals across all sectors of healthcare and society to design, deliver, and advocate for humanistic, high quality occupation-based care to enhance participation in desired activities.

### ***Rationale and Justification***

The field of occupational therapy has entered a transitional phase of restructuring with current emphasis on producing evidence-based and client-centered leaders that deliver effective outcomes. In 2017, ACOTE put forth a mandate stating that all OT programs should move to a doctoral level. This mandate raised concern in the field and was rescinded in July 2019. Regardless, many OT programs are moving to an entry-level doctorate degree, rather than the current master's level degree. Market analysis indicated that in the spring of 2019, there were 30 entry-level OTD programs. A second market analysis in October 2019, identified 81 new programs seeking initial accreditation for an entry-level OTD. At the time the proposal was submitted, there were more than one hundred programs seeking initial accreditation for an entry-level OTD (<https://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Find-School/Applicant/OTD-Applicant.aspx>).

Vermont is the only state that does not offer any educational programs in Occupational Therapy. UVM's College of Nursing and Health Sciences is well positioned to fill this gap. The proposed entry-

level OTD also aligns with UVM's Academic Excellence Goals to expand programmatic offerings to include distance and hybrid modes of instructional delivery, and to increase enrollments in graduate and professional programs.

### ***Evidence for Demand and Anticipated Enrollment***

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the OT profession remains one of the fastest growing health care professions in the US (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>), and is projected to remain strong with the current health care market trends and the aging population in the US. A data report issued by the American Occupational Association in 2018 indicated a 58% increase in the number of students enrolled in an entry-level OTD over the last ten years. The EAB market analysis stated that regional employer demand for doctoral-level occupational therapists increased 84% from September 2016 to January 2019, which is in line with the 86% increase in regional demand for all doctoral-level professionals. The market analysis also noted that the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Emsi Analyst™ project growth in national and regional employment of doctoral-level occupational therapists to outpace the average growth in employment across all occupations over the next ten years.

The proposal indicated an anticipated enrollment of 20 students in the first year, 25 students in the second year, and 40 students per year once the program enters the third year. Thus, once the program is fully established, it is expected that there will be a total of 120 students in the program.

### ***Relationship to Existing Programs and Anticipated Impact on Existing Programs***

There are currently three doctoral-level programs in CNHS, including the entry-level OTD that will be deactivated. The other two are the Interprofessional Health Sciences PhD and the direct-entry Doctorate of Nursing Practice. Letters of support were provided by both the Dean of CNHS and the Chair of the Department of Movement and Rehabilitation Sciences. To align with the interprofessional nature of CNHS, interprofessional modules will be incorporated into classes allowing occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech and language pathology students the opportunity to learn together and from each other.

Two of the courses for the proposed entry-level OTD are currently used by other programs – NH 399 Fundamentals of Critical Inquiry and NSCI 302 Neuroscience. A letter from the NH 399 course director indicated the course has the capacity to accommodate more students. Vice Chair of Education in the Department of Neurological Sciences, Margaret Vizzard, expressed some concerns regarding NSCI 302. Addition of the OTD students will double the current enrollments. There is capacity for this increase in the lecture component of the course, but limited ability to accommodate additional students in the laboratory component due to space limitations. Dr. Vizzard's letter also indicated some concerns regarding use of the anatomy laboratory for the new Functional Anatomy course. The suggestions provided in the letter were for the OTD courses to consider weekday after hours and/or weekends.

As noted previously, there are no other occupational therapy programs offered in Vermont. In New England, most of the regional OT programs are master's degrees. This works to UVM's advantage as UVM can be one of the first entry-level OTD programs in the area. Currently there are three ACOTE

entry-level doctorate programs in New England – Boston University, MGH Institute of Health Professions, and Western New England University. Boston University’s program is hybrid program, while the other two are traditional (i.e. in-person) programs. Other entry-level OT programs in New England are transitioning from an MS degree to a doctorate degree, and are in various steps of the three-step ACOTE accreditation process. These include Quinnipiac University, Tufts University, University of New Hampshire, and Johnson & Wales University-Providence. The proposers expect that by 2025, these four schools will be fully accredited at the doctorate level with traditional programs. Therefore, the proposed entry-level OT at UVM would be only the second program in the region to offer the more flexible hybrid approach.

### **Curriculum**

The proposed entry-level OTD is a three-year program, and the curriculum was designed to meet the standards set by the accreditation body, ACOTE. In total, 98 credits are required; see table below for details. All courses with the OT prefix are new. Course descriptions and syllabi were submitted with the proposal, and all have been approved in Courseleaf up to the Graduate College Dean. All courses in one semester must be successfully completed before students can progress to the next semester. If unforeseen, extenuating circumstances arise that preclude a student from completing a semester of coursework, a progression plan will be formulated on an as needed basis taking into account student needs, program needs, and ACOTE accreditation standards.

<b>FIRST YEAR</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Credits (17 total)</b>
OT 410: Foundations for OT practice	2
OT 411: Functional anatomy	4
OT 412: Movement and occupational performance	4
OT 413: Development of occupational beings	2
OT 414: Psych & MH infl on occ	3
OT 418: Activity analysis	2
<b>Spring</b>	<b>Credits (18 total)</b>
OT 425: Older adults as occupational beings	6
OT 420: Therapeutic interventions	3
NSCI 302: Neuroscience	3
OT 424: Visual, cog, percept	3
NH 399: Fundamentals of critical inquiry	3
<b>Summer</b>	<b>Credits (8 total)</b>
Fieldwork – Level I	2
OT 435: Cultural immersion	2
OT 465: Capstone I	1
OT 437: Research I	3

<b>SECOND YEAR</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Credits (16 total)</b>
OT 445: Young adults as occupational beings	6
OT 448: Designing creative therapeutic interventions	2
OT 440: Teaching and advocacy	2
OT 447: Research II	2
OT 449: OT practice management	3
OT 466: Capstone II	1
<b>Spring</b>	<b>Credits (15 total)</b>
OT 455: Children as occupational beings	6
OT 459: Becoming a life-long practitioner and learner	3
OT 456: Living life to the fullest	3
OT 457: Research III	2
OT 462: Capstone III	1
<b>Summer</b>	<b>Credits</b>
Fieldwork – Level II	8

<b>THIRD YEAR</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Credits</b>
Fieldwork – Level II	8
<b>Spring</b>	<b>Credits</b>
OT 463: Capstone IV	8

The proposed curriculum includes three unique characteristics: hybrid courses, interprofessional learning, and experiential learning opportunities. Five of the courses are fully on-line or hybrid. Two courses, OT 420 and OT 459, are designed to be interprofessional experiences and will be co-taught with OT and PT faculty with students from both disciplines participating in the classes. Additional courses lend themselves to interprofessional teaching with the Department of Communication and Science Disorders, thus interprofessional modules within other courses are likely once the program is established. The interprofessional nature of these courses gives students the opportunity to understand how professionals from different disciplines work collaboratively to enhance client participation in desired activities. Six of the courses are designed to involve experiential learning (OT 425, 435, 445, 455, 456, and 424), and the curriculum includes three fieldwork experiences. This means that roughly one-quarter of a student's learning occurs outside of the classroom setting, in real-life learning settings including skilled nursing facilities, community centers, pediatric facilities, mental health facilities, and rehabilitation facilities. Field placements will require establishment of formal relationships or MOUs with these facilities; preliminary conversations have begun and will continue following approval of the program.

The proposal indicated two additional unique characteristics will be explored once the program is established – dual entry and digital badges. Approval of the proposed entry-level OTD does not include approval of either of these; any additional programs/components will require approval through the appropriate approval processes.

### ***Admission Requirements and Advising***

To be considered for admission to the proposed entry-level OTD, a student must have a bachelors or master's degree and meet the prerequisites and additional requirements indicated below. Students will apply through the OTCAS system. An admissions committee consisting of three faculty members will review all admission applications.

#### **Pre-Requisites**

- General Psychology, 3 credits
- Abnormal Psychology, 3 credits
- Human Development, 3 credits
- Statistics, 3 credits
- Biology (in addition to A&P), 3 credits
- Human Anatomy, 3+ credits
- Human Physiology, 3+ credits
- Social Sciences (Anthropology, Humanities, Philosophy, Sociology), 6 credits
- Physics or Kinesiology, 3 credits

#### **Additional Requirements**

- Minimum cumulative GPA 3.0/4.0
- Minimum prerequisite GPA 3.2/4.0
- 40 observation hours
- English proficiency exam and TOEFL, if applicable
- Personal statement
- Three letters of recommendation
- Transcripts
- Phone or face-to-face interview

### ***Assessment Plan***

The proposed entry-level OTD will be evaluated internally every year; specific parameters for evaluation are listed below. These parameters follow the ACOTE standards for program assessment. A detailed assessment plan and assessment timeline was also included in the proposal. The program will also be assessed via the standard Academic Program Review process.

- Faculty effectiveness in their assigned teaching responsibilities
- Students' progression through the program
- Student retention rates
- Fieldwork performance evaluation
- Student evaluation of fieldwork experience
- Student satisfaction with the program
- Graduates' performance on the NBCOT certification exam
- Graduates' job placement and performance as determined by employer satisfaction
- Community satisfaction
- Graduates' continued contribution to scholarship
- Student diversity

### **Staffing Plan, Resource Requirements, and Budget**

Seven full-time faculty will be hired to support the proposed entry-level OTD. These positions will be filled systematically as budgetary resources allow while remaining compliant with ACOTE accreditation standards. In addition, an Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC) will be hired in FY20-21 to meet the ACOTE requirement that the AFWC be hired six months prior to the candidacy application date of April 15, 2021.

To address library support, the proposers met with the Interim Director of the Dana Medical Library, Gary Atwood. An evaluation of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy's Curriculum Textbook and Peer-Reviewed Journal Report (2018) revealed a need for new textbooks and additional journals. The total cost is estimated to be approximately \$5,000.

A one-time investment in some additional equipment and assessments are needed to provide the appropriate learning environment for students in the proposed entry-level OTD. The equipment and could be used in other Rehabilitation and Movement Science programs.

Additional space is necessary to launch the proposed program. The proposal included two plans, one that meets the minimum requirements to be considered adequate by ACOTE standards, and another more ambitious plan that is strongly preferred by the proposal as it will enhance the ability to deliver a high-quality learning experience for students and can be leveraged to help recruit students. The proposers indicate that the minimal plan is a short-term option, and ultimately new laboratory space such as that described in the more ambitious plan will be needed. Both plans are summarized below. A more complete description of the second plan was included in the proposal. During its review of the proposal for the new entry-level OTD, the Graduate College Executive Council requested a space MOU for the program to accommodate the more minimal plan (Plan One below). The requested space MOU is now in place.

**Plan One (minimal):** Physical space is needed for seven faculty offices per the collective bargaining agreement. In addition, classroom space is needed to teach the new courses, and storage space is needed for supplies and equipment. To secure the required interprofessional lab space, the program will reach out to rehabilitation, mental health, senior living, school-based, and pediatric facilities to develop memorandums of understanding that clinical space at said facilities could be used for laboratory teaching of entry-level OTD students.

**Plan Two (desired):** Space needs for faculty offices, classrooms for teaching, and storage are the same as Plan One. Under this plan, a Pediatric and Health Wellness Lab, Living and Learning Lab, and Design Lab would be established at UVM. Descriptions of each of the three labs along with photos/videos of representative facilities at other institutions were included. The proposers note that all of the health sciences programs are in desperate need of state-of-the-art labs to remain competitive with other programs. The new labs could be used by other CNHS programs including the Doctorate in Physical Therapy, Athletic Training, and Integrative Health Care. The letters of support from the Program Director of the Physical Therapy program, Program Director of the Integrative Health Sciences program, and Chair of the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department highlighted potential uses for the labs in their programs. As an example, the Pediatric and Health Wellness Lab is designed to be easily converted to an open floor plan accommodate an Integrative Health Care classes or a



combined OT/PT pediatric floor treatment session. Interprofessional educational opportunities in this lab could also be developed with the Early Childhood Education program, allowing education students to work collaboratively with therapy students to create optimal learning environments for children.

A budget summary including all of the expenses listed below was included in the proposal. It indicated required investments in the proposed entry-level OTD for the first three years, with revenue growing over the following five years to around \$3 million in FY27-28. The budget was based upon the anticipated enrollment of 20 and 25 in the first two years, respectively, followed by 40 students per year once the program is fully established. The letter of support from Interim Dean of CNHS, Scott Thomas, submitted with the proposal indicated he had reviewed the proposal carefully, including the financial modeling, and found it to be substantively and financially viable.

### ***Evidence of Support***

Letters were provided by the individuals below. In addition, Steven Eyler, Director of Therapy, Rehabilitation Therapies and Respiratory Care Services indicated his willingness to write a letter of support in an email to the proposers, but noted he could not write one at the time of the request due to increased demand on his time as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

- Scott Thomas, Interim Dean CNHS
- Elizabeth Adams, Chair of the CNHS Curriculum Planning Committee
- Theodore Angelopoulos, Chair of the Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Sciences
- Shelly Vellman, Chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
- Margaret A. Vizzard, Professor of Neurological Sciences Vice Chair of Education
- Reuben Escorpizo, NH 399 Course Director
- Karen Downey, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee for Higher Education, Vermont Occupational Therapy Association
- Justine Dee PT, Interim Program Director of the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program
- Karen Westervelt, Educational Program Director of Integrative Health
- Patricia Crocker, a private-practice occupational therapist in Essex Junction, VT
- Cynthia Forehand, Dean of the Graduate College

### ***Summary***

Occupational therapy is a rapidly growing field, and market analysis indicates a growing demand for trained occupational therapists both regionally and nationally. Vermont is the only state in the country not to offer an educational program in OT. Inauguration of the proposed entry-level OTD would allow UVM to fill that gap. Incorporation of online and hybrid courses along with interprofessional and experiential learning opportunities set the program apart from others in the region. The inclusion of online elements also adds flexibility that is frequently sought by adult learners. While launching the proposed entry-level OTD will require investment of resources for the first three years, over time, significant returns are projected. Letters included in the proposal indicate strong support from the Interim Dean of CNHS, Scott Thomas, chairs of the departments involved, and local stakeholders.