

MEMO

To: The UVM Faculty Senate
From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Laura Almstead, Chair
Date: January 9, 2019
Re: Approval of a proposal for a new Post-Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences in conjunction with the Graduate College

On January 9, 2019, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal for a new Post-Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy 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 2020.

Program Description

The proposed Post-Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (OTD) is designed for licensed occupational therapists wishing to expand knowledge in leadership, instructional delivery, and evidence-based and occupation-based practice. Access to the program will be limited to practicing, licensed occupational therapists, hence the designation “post-professional.” The program will be offered entirely online, and therefore allow flexible progression toward the terminal degree in the field utilizing students’ current occupational therapy degree and years of practice as a starting point. Taking into consideration the fact that students in the program will likely be working while they are enrolled in the proposed OTD, the program will offer rolling admissions, choice of live sessions, ability to earn digital badges, and didactic intense course modules (see Curriculum section for additional details).

The overarching goal of the proposed post-professional OTD is to produce occupational therapists that are leaders, occupation-based practitioners, effective educators, and scholars in their field. Students completing the program will know how to interpret and design research, understand occupation-based practice in an everchanging healthcare society, learn how to be innovative and creative in the practice and advocacy of occupational therapy, and will articulate clearly through written and verbal communication the value of the profession. The specific curricular outcomes are listed below.

- Understand research methods and design a research study
- Demonstrate knowledge translation skill by applying evidence to practice
- Articulate their leadership strengths and challenges, and devise a leadership plan that can be sustained throughout one’s professional career
- Apply one leadership method to a clinical or educational setting and reflect on the process

- Apply an innovative, creative thinking concept to a real-world scenario, either in the clinical or educational setting, and report on the success, challenges, and lessons learned
- Implement one teaching strategy in a classroom or professional venue and report outcomes of the teaching experience
- Link common practice techniques and occupation-based practice to the occupational therapy practice framework in one practice area
- Work with a scholar in their area of practice to complete an individual capstone project that has practice, research, and/or education implications for our field

Rationale and Justification

The field of Occupational Therapy (OT) has entered a transitional phase of restructuring with current emphasis on producing evidence-based and client-centered leaders that deliver effective outcomes. As a consequence, many OT programs are moving to an entry-level doctorate degree, rather than the current master's level degree. This change means there is an anticipated need for currently licensed occupational therapists to obtain a doctoral level degree to either maintain or pursue academic employment, or to remain current with evidence-based practice and occupation-based practice. The proposed post-professional OTD program meets that need.

Additionally, the proposed program 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. It addresses a clear need for currently practicing and licensed occupational therapists who desire to move up to a doctoral level terminal degree in their field. Importantly, Vermont is currently the only state that does not offer a degree in Occupational Therapy; thus this program will most certainly address local needs. The workforce demand for occupational therapists is increasing and expected to be robust for many years. Faculty affiliated with this program are also in the planning stage of developing an entry-level PhD in OT to meet the needs of future students who are not already practicing occupational therapists.

Evidence for Demand and Anticipated Enrollment

Candidates for the proposed OTD will be licensed occupational therapists from around the nation and the world. The proposers indicate that a majority of practicing occupational therapists have either a bachelor's or master's level degree. As noted above, the profession's educational requirements are changing. Because of this, faculty shortages are anticipated, and currently practicing occupational therapists are likely to seek avenues to advance their education. According to a market analysis submitted with the proposal, there is a significant regional demand for doctoral-level trained occupational therapists. Given that there are no occupational therapy programs currently in Vermont, there is strong support in the community to start offering this level of education to state residents.

The proposers anticipate that approximately five students will initially enroll per semester, for a total of 15 students per academic year. Eventually, they estimate that seven to ten students will enroll per semester and summer, for a total of 21 to 30 students.

Relationship to Existing Programs and Anticipated Impact on Existing Programs

There are currently three doctorate level programs in CNHS: (1) Entry-level Doctorate of Physical Therapy; (2) Doctorate of Nursing Practice; (3) Doctor of Philosophy in Human Functioning and Rehabilitation Sciences. The proposed program is unique and distinctive in that it is offered entirely online and specifically designed for licensed occupational therapists. There is a Doctor of Nursing Practice post-professional degree that may be begun post-licensure; however, licensure is not a prerequisite for entry. There are no other post-professional clinical doctorate programs at UVM. The proposers indicate that inauguration of the proposed OTD program will have no impact on the existing programs.

As noted previously, there are no other occupational therapy programs offered in Vermont. Market analysis identified only seven online programs in the United States. Thus, UVM is in a unique position to bring occupational therapy education to Vermont and be at the forefront of online OT programs.

Curriculum

The curriculum is designed with five threads: evidence-based practice, leadership, innovation, teaching excellence, and occupation-based practice. To complete the proposed OTD program, students must take a total of six credits in evidence-based practice, leadership, and teaching, as well as eight credits of capstone experience and a two-credit course at the end of their program to design their portfolio. All of the courses are new and are moving through the approval process in CourseLeaf; complete syllabi were submitted with the proposal.

Students entering with a bachelor’s degree will need to take two additional prerequisite courses – a course in statistics and OT 488. Any college-level statistics course will satisfy the statistics requirement. OT 488 (Exploring current occupational therapy theory and practice) discusses current occupational therapy theory and practice and will be offered online through UVM. Both courses must be taken in the first semester. Students who have taken a college-level statistics course within the last five years may submit that for transfer credit.

Course Thread	Course #	Course Name	Credits
Evidence-based practice	OT 480	Evidence-based practice I	3
	OT 481	Evidence-based practice II	3
Leadership	OT 482	Leadership Exploration	3
	OT 483	Maximizing your Leadership Potential	3
Professional scholarship	OT 465	Capstone I: Professional Scholarship	2
	OT 466	Capstone II: Supporting Evidence	2
	OT 467	Capstone III: Implementation	2
	OT 468	Capstone IV: Dissemination	2
	OT 489	Designing your Portfolio	2
Occupation-based practice	OT 487	Examining Occupation-Based Practice	3
Professional innovation	OT 484	Innovation and Creative Thinking	3

Teaching excellence	OT 485	Implementing Adult Learning Theory I	3
	OT 486	Implementing Adult Learning Theory II	2

As indicated in the Program Description section of this report, the proposed OTD program makes use of didactic intense course modules. All courses run the entire semester, however didactic material for some courses is condensed into eight week modules. Following the intensive didactic instruction, students and faculty spend the remaining seven weeks of the semester focusing on more complex learning strategies that allow students adequate time to appraise, support, develop, critique, and design scholarly material. During this time, specific weekly objectives and assessments are utilized to ensure maximal learning. The use of didactic intense course modules is designed to give students focused time to process and apply learned material at a deeper level.

Two optional, in-person sessions will be offered each year, one in fall at UVM and one in the spring at the American Occupational Therapy Association annual meeting (location changes annually). The sessions will provide students the opportunity to network with UVM faculty and professionals from around the country, and encourage students to get involved at a national level. They will also give students the opportunity to meet their peers and explore concepts related to OT practice, education, and research in a face-to-face environment. For the sessions held at UVM, students who are unable to travel will have the option to participate remotely. Students will be able to attend as many of these live sessions as desired, even after they graduate.

The proposed OTD program also includes the opportunity to earn digital badges, which are a relatively new concept in the clinical arena. Currently, the proposers are working on a policy and process for awarding digital badges. Once the appropriate policies and processes have been approved, the proposed OTD programs plans to utilize digital badges to mark progress through the curriculum. Badges are awarded after completion of particular courses and do not require any additional components. Badges are not a requirement for program completion, and the program can run with out them.

Admission Requirements and Advising

Applicants to the proposed OTD must meet the minimum requirements below. As previously indicated, students entering with a bachelor’s degree will need to take two additional prerequisite courses (statistics and OT 488).

- Bachelor’s or master’s degree in occupational therapy from the US or abroad
- Minimum cumulative GPA 3.2 (based on a 4.0 maximum scale)
- Appropriate transcripts
- Two years of clinical practice as a licensed occupational therapist
- Personal statement
- Three letters of recommendation
- Curriculum Vitae
- Interview (phone, virtual, or face-to-face)
- English proficiency exam as required by UVM Graduate College

In the first year, an admissions committee consisting of two faculty members will review all admission applications. As the Occupational Therapy program grows and develops, three faculty members will be assigned to the admissions committee. The Program Director will provide academic advising to all students as they progress through the program. Additional occupational therapy faculty will assume advising roles as needed.

Assessment Plan

A detailed assessment plan and assessment timeline was submitted as part of the proposal. Following internal assessment, a report will be generated every May and shared with the faculty. The proposed OTD program will be assessed based on the parameters below. Individual courses will be evaluated through student evaluations, attendance, grades, peer evaluations, and OT program curricular decisions. Like all UVM degree programs, it will also be reviewed as part of the normal Academic Program Review process.

- Faculty effectiveness in their assigned teaching responsibilities
- Students' progression through the program.
- Student retention rates
- Student satisfaction with the program
- Graduates' job advancement
- Graduates' continued contribution to scholarship

Staffing Plan, Resource Requirements, and Budget

When the program is operating at full capacity, the proposers estimate that three FTE faculty effort will be required to run it. In addition to the Program Director, Dr. Victoria Priganc, one 9-month faculty member and one part-time faculty member will be hired. The proposers also expect additional money will be required for part-time faculty on an as-needed basis. While the demand for a post-professional OTD is expected to decrease with time as currently licensed and practicing occupational therapists obtain a doctoral-level degree in the field, the two faculty positions are not temporary. The Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Science is in the process of developing an entry-level Occupational Therapy PhD program to meet the needs of students entering the field of OT, and expect to submit an additional program proposal later this year. The faculty hired to support the proposed post-professional OTD program will also be needed for the soon-to-be-proposed entry-level PhD in OT.

A summary of the budget analysis indicates the proposed program will be viable if students can be attracted at the expected levels (a total of 15 students in the first year, and 7 to 21 in subsequent years) with approximately 50% in-state and 50% out of state students. The proposers acknowledge that UVM's high out of state tuition could make it difficult to attract this many out of state students, and once the program is approved will initiate the process to request a variable tuition to reduce the cost to out of state students while still ensuring positive net revenue.

The letter from the Dean of CNHS, Scott Thomas, indicates that he has carefully reviewed the proposal and will support appropriate allocation of College and Institutional resources such that the proposed OTD program can be successfully implemented.

The proposers indicate that the library has most of the needed journals and estimate only one additional journal is necessary, the Journal of Occupational Science. The proposers are working with Gary Atwood, Interim Director of the Dana Medical Library, to determine whether the library's budget can support the cost (\$532).

Instructional design support is needed given that the program is 100% on-line. CNHS has secured funding to support the development of the OTD portfolio in partnership with UVM Continuing and Distance Education, including online course development team support for the online programming.

Evidence of Support

Letters of support were provided by the individuals below. The proposal was also approved by the CNHS Curriculum Planning Committee.

- Theodore J. Angelopoulos, Chair, Department of Rehabilitation & Movement Sciences
- Shelley Velleman, Chair, Communication Sciences and Disorders
- Scott Thomas, Interim Dean of CNHS
- Cynthia Belliveau, Dean of Continuing and Distance Education
- Cynthia Forehand, Dean of the Graduate College

Summary

The proposed Post-Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy will be the first OT degree program in Vermont, and will meet the needs of currently licensed occupational therapists as the field shifts from requiring a master's level degree to a doctoral level degree. The curriculum is well-structured, meets the competencies of the professional organization standards, and provides the flexibility required for working professionals. All courses have been designed in collaboration with Continuing and Distance Education support to ensure best practices in online education.

Workforce demand for occupational therapists is increasing and expected to be robust for many years. Resources invested in the proposed program (e.g. a full time faculty member) will also support an entry-level Occupational Therapy PhD that is currently being developed. Inauguration of the proposed post-professional OTD program and anticipated proposal for an entry-level degree will allow Vermont to meet future workforce demands in occupational therapy without students needing to leave the state to be trained. The program 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. Therefore, the proposed OTD will be a valuable addition to UVM's graduate program portfolio.