Elizabeth Stevens MA, OTR/L, ATP and Paula Johnson, BA, COTA/L taught OCAT courses in spring 2014 - OCAT 20003 - OT Practical Skills III and OCAT 20000 - Therapeutic Techniques II, respectively. Both have shared their work experiences and knowledge in a variety of settings, including pediatrics and adult physical dysfunction, with the current group of students. Learn more about Megan Shumaker, Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and full-time faculty in our Faculty Focus section. We are so pleased to have such a talented and enthusiastic group of faculty!

With all of this change, I am happy to report on the continued success of the program and its graduates. Congratulations to our December 2013 graduates! Each of them passed their NBCOT certification exam on their first attempt and early results of our 6-month employment survey show that 100% of respondents are now working as COTAs throughout the region.

A new cohort of students began the program this summer. From a record high number of 54 applicants, twenty-six highly qualified students were selected and are eagerly awaiting their upcoming hands-on and fieldwork experiences.

Please feel free to contact me at jmirabel@kent.edu or 440-964-4316 with any updates, questions or comments.

Faculty and staff changes have been a focus and highlight of the OCAT program this year. Please join me in welcoming Theresa Hootman, Megan Shumaker, Elizabeth Stevens and Paula Johnson to our team! Theresa joined the program as our secretary in the fall of 2013, coming to us from another department on campus. She is highly organized and professional, a strong asset to the program and a helpful resource for students.

New adjunct instructors, their first attempt and early results of our 6-month employment survey show that 100% of respondents are now working as COTAs throughout the region.

A new cohort of students began the program this summer. From a record high number of 54 applicants, twenty-six highly qualified students were selected and are eagerly awaiting their upcoming hands-on and fieldwork experiences.

Please feel free to contact me at jmirabel@kent.edu or 440-964-4316 with any updates, questions or comments.

Graduate Recognition and Awards

Congratulations to the OCAT Class of 2013!

Ashley Berk
Kelly Chambers
Erin Cook
Laura Hardwick
Amy Jennison*
Margaret Kelner*
Nancy McCauley
Heather Mullins*
Rebecca Newton*
Yvette Rudin
Sandra Rumer
Karen Sethman
Amber Shook
Karen Starcher
Melissa Taller
Kayla Gale
Susan Writz*
Antonia Urbas*

*Graduated with Distinction
In the Field

Student Occupational Therapy Assistant (SOTA) Club

The past school year has been a very busy one for the students of the SOTA Club. Fundraising, community projects and a trip to Baltimore for the OTA conference were the highlights of the year, fitted in between their class schedules and various field experiences.

Last fall, the club sold pepperoni balls made by Little Italy in Ashtabula. Proceeds from the sale helped defray some of the cost involved for students to attend the AOTA conference. This was a fun sale and all buyers were happy with the delicious snacks!

Early in the Spring, club members assisted the residents of Bridgeview Manor, which is part of the Signature Health System, in creating a garden. Caring for the soil and plants will provide an excellent opportunity for those in need of some occupational therapy along with the garden being a nutritious food source for the facility.

Near the end of the year, 6 fortunate SOTA students along with director Julie Mirabell attended the annual OTA conference held in Baltimore, Maryland. The students took advantage of some classes, learned about current equipment and practices and shared experiences with many OT professionals. The students also were able to spend some fun time with each other at dinners and shopping!

The students of the SOTA Club would like to thank their family, friends and instructors for their support this year!

~ Krissy Krumins, OTAS
In the Classroom

In this second year, summer session course, students learn advanced concepts and techniques for physical disabilities. Taught in the final semester before Level II fieldwork, the course is designed to prepare OCAT students for the challenges of the clinic experience.

Topics and diagnoses covered in this class include traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, hand therapy, splinting, superficial thermal modalities and driver rehabilitation. Highlights of the course include fieldtrips to experience aquatic therapy with Ashtabula County Medical Center, driver rehabilitation with Euclid Hospital and vehicle modifications at MC Mobility. Students also learn and practice splinting with sales consultants from Patterson Medical.

Lab experiences are designed with the fast pace of clinical life in mind; at the end of each class, students are given a case study related to the day’s topic. Within a short period of time, they develop a treatment plan, carry it out in a role play situation for their classmates, and document the treatment. Course exams are given in a proctored, computer-based format to emulate testing conditions of the NBCOT exam.

The class culminates with a lab practical assessment and presentations of students’ research into the effectiveness of OT treatment with the populations and techniques covered in the class. OCAT student Jennifer Simmons states, “Aquatic therapy and splinting are more detailed and difficult than I expected. I thought it was good to be able to experience them first hand.”

Alumni spotlight

Laura Meier
Class of 2010

Before I embarked on my COTA/L journey at Kent State Ashtabula Campus I was a service professional for over 15 years (fancy name for waitress). I also had a small cleaning business and sometimes 2-3 additional different jobs before deciding to enter the OCAT program.

Since graduation and passing the National certification I have worked in the pediatric setting and the nursing home setting. I loved the pediatric setting for my first year and a half and filled in all the vacation and weekend days that come with pediatrics with PRN in local nursing homes. I was offered the opportunity to be the rehab director at one of my small local PRN nursing homes and decided to give it a try. The OT interventions and processes are different in the nursing home compared to pediatrics and although I can see my self returning to peds one day, I am enjoying the challenges of my new setting.

I currently live in Ashtabula Harbor with my boyfriend and nephew. I have all my family close to town and am lucky to work locally so I can spend time with them.

Some guiding thoughts I have for all OCAT students and new grads are this: trust in what you know, give 100% all the time, walk with purpose (Medicare is counting your minutes!) and listen to the patient. Working as a team with other staff (nursing, administration and other therapists ) is key to client centered care. As COTA’s we get to interact with patients in a way that others in the palliative care group don’t.

What I like best about being a COTA/L is being creative by grading tasks and adapting household items to help others in functional activities that enhance their everyday life. I also love the funny things the kids and geriatric population say and come up with! Good luck and remember to be an advocate for OT. Oh yeah, I also love continuing education seminars and I love…. and…. and…. I could go on forever!

Applications for the OCAT CLASS OF 2016 which begins in Summer 2015 are now being accepted.

The application deadline is March 1, 2015

For complete application details, visit:
Faculty/Staff Focus

Meet Megan Shumaker

Please join the OCAT program in welcoming Megan Shumaker, OT/L, as the program's new Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. Megan joined the program in January with an appointment as a full-time faculty member.

A graduate of Cleveland State University, Megan brings experience in a variety of settings, including acute care, sub-acute and skilled nursing facilities. She has completed certificate level training in NDT and fieldwork education, and has experience teaching neurological evaluation and treatment content to CSU’s OT students.

According to Megan, “In the OT profession, we have the responsibility to stay lifelong learners and remain on top of current research which more and more provides evidence that our original treatment methods of occupation-based, functional and meaningful tasks, crafts, and activities of daily living lead to greater rehab outcomes. Currently, I see a shift back to our original roots of how and why the profession evolved, and as a faculty member with the unique position of Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, I have an obligation to help facilitate this journey back to the basics of OT. I can envision a time in the near future where most students will transition to the clinic and see the fundamentals that they learned in the classroom, practiced by everyday OTs with pride and clear role delineation from other healthcare professionals. Although it’s a challenge, I feel excited to be part of this profession and in this position as we transition back to our original roots and continue to teach the foundations of our profession with the backing of growing scientific evidence.

In a short time, I have met so many wonderful faculty and staff who have been willing to help me through my own transition from the clinic to the classroom. I’ve had the honor of working with the diverse population of students working in a regional campus provides, who are in various stages of life. I look forward to facilitating their knowledge of the profession and what they have to give to the community even at this early stage in their careers. I know I have a lot to learn, but feel I have the best support and mentorship here at Kent State University in order to be successful and give back to the students and the profession.”

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