We are very proud of these results!

Ninety two percent of our 2014 graduates were able to find employment within 6 months of graduation, and their employers report a high level of satisfaction with the level of preparation by the program. We are so pleased that our OTA students are increasingly valuing the experiences of attending state and national OT conferences—read more about student experiences at the 2015 AOTA Annual Conference on page 2.

Additionally, KSUA OTA students will serve as the volunteers at this year’s OOTA Annual Conference—we hope to see you in Columbus on September 25-26. While SOTA Club helps to provide some funds associated with these events, a high level of time and financial commitment is still required for students to participate. It is so exciting to see the high level of engagement of these new and future COTAs as they begin their careers!

Increasing engagement is a continuing goal for the program. Inspired by Christina White, one of our second year students, we are in the very early stages of working with a national organization to provide adaptive bicycles to individuals with disabilities. We are in need of help with this major undertaking! If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at jmirabel@kent.edu or 440-964-4316.

Graduate Recognition and Awards

Congratulations to the OCAT Class of 2014!

Naomi Brezovsky
Lindsey Brunetti
Jennifer Cunningham*
Linda Dreslinski
Megan Dunford
Will Ebersole*
Julie Franko
Heather Hoffman*
Shmuel Kagarlistskiy
Meghan Kilbane*
Cyndi Park*
Katie Rebol
Jennifer Simmons
Shelley Stowers
Bill Taylor*
Kenny Zalar

Outstanding Student Award
Service Award
*Graduated with Distinction
In the Field

Fieldwork Educator

Having started as Academic Fieldwork Coordinator in January of last year, I would never have anticipated all the challenges this position holds. Teaching, scheduling, legal contracts, learning fieldwork sites and their special requirements, policies and procedures of the program and university, and trying to educate 28 people with different personalities, learning styles and life experiences in one classroom are only a few of the responsibilities I’ve faced over the last year and a half. The greatest challenge, however, has been to provide fieldwork placements for the students.

I commend the FWEs who have shown such enthusiasm and commitment to our students over the years and I want you to know that I am also committed to supporting you in the community as well. At KSUA, we are facing, along with other OTA programs across the country, a national shortage of fieldwork sites. After gaining some insight into this situation at this year’s AOTA Conference and Ohio Fieldwork Consortium meetings, we are currently researching other models of supervision. One promising option that we are piloting this fall semester is the Collaborative Model. This approach involves two Level II students for one (or more) fieldwork educators. This model of FW education is proven to be effective for students as well as helpful to FW educators. Having two students together allows students to take more of the responsibility for their own learning and problem solve together vs. placing all the demands on the FWE.

In closing, thank you for your patience as I continue to learn this new role and the needs of the surrounding community. I would love to hear your ideas as well on how we can better support you in the community and prepare you for taking students (we are currently working on adding free CEU opportunities for FW educators). I look forward to collaborating with you on how we can work together to support each other’s programs and our profession; please feel free to contact me by phone or email.

Student Occupational Therapy Assistant (SOTA) Club

This past year has brought many great opportunities for the SOTA club to advocate to our community about what Occupational Therapy is, as well as give us the opportunity to serve and give back to our community. Community service, fundraising, social events, and the AOTA conference were all the major highlights of our year all while we were busy completing classroom work, exams, and level 1 fieldwork.

For community service, many of our members split up and participated in many different activities in the fall. Some members participated in walks while others donated their time at the Lantern in Madison, Ohio, helping residents make sock snowmen for Christmas. In the spring, we decided to come together collectively and volunteer our time at the Longest Day of Play at Lakeshore Park. We are also happy to announce that we have started to work collaboratively with the East Liverpool SOTA club to serve our community together. In years to come we can hopefully continue to work together with East Liverpool students to create many meaningful and fun events for students at the Developmental Disability school in Youngstown, Ohio. Next year, the plan is to work as one to create a carnival for the younger students in that school.

Fundraising this year was a huge hit! We focused on selling Yankee Candles in the fall and then worked on selling Malley’s candy bars in the spring. Some of these funds helped 10 lucky students defray the cost of attending the AOTA national conference in Nashville, Tennessee in April. Julie Mirabel (program director), Megan Schumaker (field work coordinator), and Dotti Thompson (professor) also attended the conference with the students helping to provide more insight and education when needed. During this time, students participated in classes, explored poster presentations and research with OT professionals, networking with fellow students and current OT/COTAs, and the expo. In the evenings, students enjoyed all sights and sounds Nashville had to offer!

The SOTA club would like to thank all of the staff, our families, and friends for all their support and help as we journey through this program!

--- Nicole Best-OTA/S
New mandates from the Ohio Board Regents require that Associate degrees, such as KSUA’s Associate of Applied Science in Occupational Therapy Assistant Technology, include no more than 65 credit hours for completion. This initiative aims at helping students graduate in a timely manner; similar requirements also are now in place for Baccalaureate degrees.

Currently, the KSU OCAT program requires 69 hours for completion. While this is on the low end of the range for OTA programs throughout the country, the program will be in compliance with this standard beginning in Fall 2016. To eliminate the four credit hours, the OCAT program has made the difficult decision to remove our one credit OCAT elective and the three credit hour Introduction to Sociology courses from our curriculum.

Additionally, a new subject designation will be used for some courses that are required in the OCAT program. Allied Health Science (AHS) will be the new subject for several courses previously owned by other programs, but used by multiple health care program. These courses are currently called Analysis of Movement (PTST), Human Growth and Development (NURS), and Therapeutic Communications (PTST). These changes are more reflective of the course content and also have the added benefit of being able to be taught by a faculty member in any Allied Health program.

My area of interest is Neuro Rehab with a stroke and TBI focus. To further that interest, I will be pursuing my CSRS (Certified Stroke Rehab Specialist). I am a member of the AOTA and the OOTA. I also am a clinical instructor for Level I and II Fieldwork students.

I grew up in Cleveland, but have lived in Madison for many years. I have two children aged 14 and 16. I also have a wonderful and supportive boyfriend who has 4 children of his own. We have our very own Brady bunch! But I wouldn’t have it any other way and we have a lot of fun together.

I think the golden rule still holds true…treat others the way you would want to be treated. That is how I try to live my life and how I view my interactions with patients. I have never had a stroke or a TBI or an amputation so I have no idea what that feels like. The best thing I can do is provide a listening ear, empathize and treat them the best that I can.

I love the idea of giving back. Working with the veteran population really helps to drive that point home. The men and women that I work with have put it all on the line and are so deserving of getting the best care possible. Working in Occupational Therapy, I have the chance every day to help someone gain back some independence. Every day is something different and provides new challenges; I love that about this profession.

I am employed at the Cleveland VA Medical Center. I have been there for about 3 1/2 years (my first job out of school). The VA is a very big facility, actually the Cleveland VA is the 3rd largest in the country. I work in the Cares Tower which is a short term inpatient rehab. It is like the skilled nursing portion of the VA.

My case load consists of the Cares Tower patients as well as veterans in our stroke outpatient and polytrauma clinics. The stroke clinic treats stroke patients after they have discharged from the facility. The polytrauma clinic consists of our younger veterans who were injured while on active duty and have sustained trauma to more than one body system (hence the name Poly-Trauma).
New to the OCAT program’s faculty in 2014, Elizabeth Stevens, M.A., OTR/L, ATP serves as an adjunct instructor teaching OCAT 20003—OT Practice Skills III and OCAT 20004—Therapeutic Techniques III—Developmental Disabilities.

A graduate of Western Michigan University’s OT program, Liz also earned a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Eastern Michigan University. She currently works full-time in Mentor Public Schools, but has experience in rehabilitation, skilled nursing facilities; previously, Liz worked as a clinical education instructor for Invacare Corporation. With this variety of work experience, her certification as Assistive Technology Professional, and her energetic and engaging teaching style, Liz is a great addition to the program.

In her words, “Today, I am a passionate advocate for the field of occupational therapy. I think we work in the best profession in the world and I tell our students that all the time. However, if I honestly reflect on my relationship with the field of OT, I know I have not always felt this way. In a way, my OT love story reminds me more of an arranged marriage. As a college student, I did not have this passion for OT. Rather, OT “seemed like a good match.” We would have good prospects together, and it I put in the effort we could make a good life, OT and I. Yet, over the years as I got to know more about OT and saw its diverse personality, I became smitten. With each new population with whom I worked, and with each new challenging situation, OT has increased my capacity for compassion, ingenuity, creativity and collaboration. Now years later, you could say I am utterly devoted and am a better person for having OT as a part of my life.

“I now have the awesome opportunity to share my passion with our exceptional students and to work with outstanding fellow instructors. I have learned so much through this opportunity and feel overwhelmingly blessed to be a member of the KSU Ashtabula faculty. I am excited to be a contributor to a program that is focused on evidenced-based practice, comprehensive preparation to meet the current challenges new graduates will face in the field, providing insight into emerging markets for OT-related services, and encouraging students to apply their individual interests (music, art, technology, animals, and alternative therapies) to their areas of OT practice.”