

**Pacific University College of Health Professions**  
**School of Occupational Therapy**  
**Philosophy Design of the Curriculum**  
(11/21/06)

The ultimate goal of an occupational therapy education is to prepare occupational therapists to serve people to participate in the full range of life's everyday activities, or *occupations* that we believe will lead to improved health and well-being. Students in the School of Occupational Therapy collaborate with faculty to shape their student- and learning-centered educational experience in a way that helps them understand the elements of client-centered OT practice. The educational process is directed to equipping the professional student with a full repertoire of skills, a comprehensive knowledge base, and advanced critical thinking abilities with which to provide excellent and relevant services to their future clients and promote occupational justice for all. Occupational injustice occurs when people do not have equal opportunities to pursue meaningful and healthful occupations due to economic, political, geographical, or other constraints. Occupational therapists increase occupational justice when they empower individuals, communities, or governments to improve opportunities for people to *do* those occupations that will enhance their health, satisfaction, and meaning in life and is accomplished through many means such as advocacy, work for social justice, education, and public health promotion.

A primary belief within the School of Occupational Therapy is that in order to effectively address the complex problems and challenges facing people living in today's world, health service providers, and occupational therapists in particular, need to practice from an integrated base of knowledge. An integrated practitioner blends empirical knowledge of traditional sciences with the humanistic knowledge from behavioral, social, and philosophical disciplines for holistic practice. Students also are provided with an in-depth understanding of *occupation* in order to apply this most unique and powerful tool for promotion of health and well-being as the essential tool of *occupational* therapy. With this unique and complementary knowledge base, the student will also consider the person's mind, body, and spirit needs, particularly the spirit for action through occupation, that supports the whole human experience for optimal living and doing.

It is increasingly evident that optimum attainment of health and well-being occurs best with active engagement of the client in the therapy process. Likewise, learning occurs best with active involvement of the learner. The School of Occupational Therapy curriculum immerses the student in active learning experiences throughout the curriculum that culminates with extensive full-time fieldwork experiences (more than 30 weeks) in which the student is mentored and guided into the field by practicing occupational therapists. As opportunities for fieldwork and practice increasingly include work with clients from diverse backgrounds, the curriculum assures the student will build a solid foundation of cultural competence and ethical reasoning.

Once the student has demonstrated competence in classroom and fieldwork courses, she or he develops projects that create innovative occupational therapy service plans and that envision creative future practices. These advanced projects are designed to address the

needs of individuals or groups who typically would not have the option of occupational therapy services, yet are likely to benefit from an enhanced knowledge and role of occupation in their lives. In the program, students learn that there are many ways to achieve positive change, not only in the lives of their clients through effectively applied therapeutic occupation, but also how to improve society and health delivery systems for through leadership and advocacy for occupational justice.

**Pacific University**  
**School of Occupational Therapy**  
(8/06)

**General Outcome Objectives of Curriculum**

The learning process within this curriculum weaves together multiple levels of knowledge, skills and abilities which shall, upon completion of the curriculum, enable the student to:

1. Reason from a sound philosophical base, while practicing both the art and science of occupational therapy, to provide quality services in a variety of practice environments.
2. Demonstrate the use of occupation in the maintenance, restoration, and promotion of health and wellness in environments of self-care, work, education, play, leisure and social participation with individuals across the age span.
3. Demonstrate the values, personal and professional ethics, and commitment to lifelong learning that are necessary to serve society and achieve fulfillment in ever-changing environments.
4. Use professional and community leadership skills to promote the continuous evolution of quality health care within diverse social, cultural, political and institutional environments.
5. Promote understanding of the unique efficacy of occupation as a means of maintaining health in the community at large.
6. Use and contribute to the body of knowledge related to the study of human occupation and the practice of occupational therapy.

**Design of the Curriculum:**

The overall design of the curriculum can be likened to the creation of quilt (inspired by the donation of a beautiful quilt to the School by Teresa Fairfield, Class of 1993). Layers of knowledge are crafted one upon the other as a foundation to the many individual quilt squares that lead to a complex and beautiful pattern. The pattern represents the integration of the student's knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and professional values into a full understanding and application of the occupational therapy process to promote wholeness, health, and well-being for those they serve. The newly emerged practitioner is then able to facilitate the client's construction of his or her own quilt, helping the client to a new level of knowledge as an occupational being with enhanced adaptive abilities and greater participation in society for a healthier lifestyle through collaboration with occupational therapy.

The curriculum of the School of Occupational Therapy is designed to facilitate and guide the student to achieve the outcome objectives (listed above) while developing the knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs to practice as an integral scientist-practitioner (one skilled in applying the art and science of practice, Yerxa, 2005). This is accomplished through a carefully designed series of courses that help the student develop the skills to critically analyze the best available evidence to support practice decisions, balanced with content and courses that emphasize the humanistic aspects of the lives of their future clients. The first three and half semesters of the curriculum are designed to provide increasingly higher levels of knowledge and application of the occupational therapy process along with the biological, psychological, philosophical, systems analysis, and clinical reasoning foundations needed for challenging human problems and for practice in complex health care systems.

In the first semester, the basic building blocks in the development of an integral practitioner are laid, 1) philosophy, 2) scholarship, 3) OT process, 4) science, and 5) clinical reasoning. The unique and most powerful tool for an occupational therapist is a thorough understanding of occupation. In the *Foundations of Occupation and Occupational Therapy* course (OT 400), students begin an in-depth exploration of the many ways that people occupy their time and the ways in which people attach meaning and purpose to their occupations. Through an examination of the history and philosophy of the profession and the leading theories used in OT, students build a foundation for thinking like an occupational therapist, and begin to view the world through an OT lens. The course also builds an understanding the personal, cultural, and environmental factors that shape a person's occupations and examine the concept of occupational justice. The occupational therapy process of evaluation and intervention is introduced and explored simultaneously in OT 407 (*OT Process with Younger Children*) & 416 (*Occupational Analysis*), while the fundamental skills for evidence-based practice and scholarship are developed OT 418 (*Scholarships and Evidence-Based Practice*). In the first course to focus on the OT process, there begins an examination of human development by studying early child development while also building the fundamentals of clinical reasoning (OT 407 in conjunction with OT 419-*Seminar I: The OT Profession*). Seminar courses each semester are designed to facilitate the development of professional behaviors and reasoning while providing a forum for the more explicit integration of course material, and in the first semester, this seminar course is OT 419.

The School of Occupational Therapy's extensive fieldwork program begins with lab-related experiences in the first semester (in OT 407 & 416) which leads to full time Level I rotations in the first weeks of the second semester (OT 422- *Level IA Fieldwork*). In the second semester, practicum visits to OT practice settings help students apply the theoretical and technical knowledge they are building in the OT process courses (OT 433-*OT Process with Older Children and Adolescents* & *OT Process with Adults with Physical* 435, and *Psychosocial* 434-*Challenges*). The second and third semesters emphasize the development of skill in understanding and applying the OT process as well as more advanced basic science knowledge and application, along with technical skill development balanced with knowledge of key theories and practice models (OT 433, 434, 435, 530-*OT Process with Older Adults*, & 531- *OT Process with Adults with Neurological Challenges*). Simultaneously, students are exposed to opportunities to learn and apply ethical reasoning to cultural case examples that are increasingly more complex and diverse through service learning projects (OT 413- *Seminar II: Leadership & Service* & the OT process courses). An emphasis on the art of occupational therapy that begins primarily in OT 400 and 419 continues in OT 432 (*Therapeutic Approaches for Client-centered Practice*) as students learn interviewing skills, therapeutic use of self, and more about human motivation and behavior as well as their professional role in service and leadership (OT 413).

Students learn how to appraise and implement standardized assessment (OT 437- *Standardized Assessments in Client-centered OT*) across the lifespan and diagnostic categories while examining the role of occupation in people's lives who are experiencing chronic disability, thus expanding an understanding of cultural difference based on disability (OT 438- *Occupation & Adaptation for People Experiencing Disabilities*). In the third semester, students learn more about health systems and services in order to more effectively work within and lead change for health care institutions and agencies and advocating for occupational justice through social and political means (OT 532-*Management of OT Services*) and advance their skills in scholarly research and writing along with more complex evidence-based practice application to case studies (OT 533-*Scholarship and Evidence-Based Practice II*) that are drawn directly from their fieldwork experiences (OT 522-*Level IB Fieldwork*).

In the fourth semester, students begin 20 weeks of full time level II fieldwork (OT 621-*Level IIA & 622-Level IIB*) in which they are expected to apply their knowledge, skill, and reasoning abilities in full time assignment to varied practice settings. Returning to the classroom in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students apply reflection and advanced clinical reasoning to cases collected in fieldwork rotations and collect and appraise evidence related to those cases while examining the system factors that shape and influence practice (OT 631—*Seminar IV: The Reflective Practitioner*). Didactic coursework focuses on development of advanced skills with pediatric practice in preparation for the final level II fieldwork (OT 623-*Level IIC*) that occurs in the final ten weeks of the semester. The sixth and final semester is dedicated to helping the student develop OT programs that will address needs across a wide range of populations and systems through development of innovative (OT 633-*Enacting Innovative Practice*) and visionary practice (OT 635-*Visionary OT Program Development*) projects in hopes of inspiring the emerging practitioner to lead change in his or her future organizations and carry a spirit of service into their new careers. Students in the sixth semester will also develop an evidence-based practice project (OT 632-*Evidence-Based Practice in Current Settings*) requiring advanced clinical and critical reasoning. Advanced practice skill development (OT 634-*Advanced Topics in OT*) will promote development of additional specialty knowledge for the new graduate to take into practice.

The curriculum is further designed to fulfill the mission of the School of Occupational Therapy so that graduates, as integrated practitioners, are able to “promote health in mind, body, and spirit through the use of therapeutic activities (occupations) that enhance quality of life for individuals with whom they work, and the communities in which they live.” As School of Occupational Therapy graduates move into practice, it is expected that they will have profound effects on the occupational lives of their clients to promote satisfaction with life and enhance their social participation. These practitioners will also have significant potential to change society for the better by helping people and institutions to understand the complex interaction of occupation and health and how applying the OT process can support the achievement of occupational justice for all.

**Pacific University College of Health Professions**  
**School of Occupational Therapy**  
**Description of the Curricular Graphic Model: The Integrated Practitioner for**  
**Promotion of Occupational Participation**

This model is designed to depict the elements of the educational process by which students develop into integrated practitioners, skilled at using occupational therapy knowledge, techniques, and process to promote participation of people in society through meaningful and satisfying occupations. The concept of the integrated practitioner is well described in the curricular philosophy. The three circles of the Venn diagram in this model are used intentionally as a reflection of the important role that the PEO, Person-Environment-Occupation interaction plays, not only in the OT process, but also in the educational experience of our students. Like the PEO model, these circles are conceived to be in dynamic and simultaneous interaction with each other as the student develops the foundational knowledge through experiential and practical learning that supports his or her understanding of client factors needed for a person to engage in desired areas of occupation within his or her environmental context.

The *Foundational Education* is what helps the student learn to appreciate the elements of the human system (i.e., *client factors*) needed to DO chosen occupations. The foundational knowledge base will be built with blocks of neuroscience, physical function, psychological factors and processes, and an understanding of how people create and derive meaning through their occupations, as well as the skills of therapeutic interaction and evaluation and intervention for people across the lifespan. Appraising and using the best evidence available to support therapeutic decision-making (i.e., evidence-based practice) is another foundational skill built in this aspect of the curriculum.

The *Experiential Education* component of the model implies that students learn about occupation (i.e., *areas of occupation*) through the doing and through interpreting their own and others' experience of occupational engagement and performance. These learning experiences take place within and outside of the classroom and build quickly toward the first aspect of the *Practical Education* that occurs between the semesters of the first year in the form of the Level IA fieldwork experience. In this component of the curriculum, the student will learn the value of the narrative story the client and the role that meaningful occupation plays in his or her life to better understand the humanistic side of practice.

In the *Practical Education* portion of the model, the student comes to appreciate the role of the *environmental context*, not only on the occupations of people being served by occupational therapy, but occupations of the therapists with whom they are shadowing and working. Through these experiences, the student brings the clinical and client stories from practice settings back to the classroom. The student then begins to use those stories to understand how the foundational knowledge of client factors, clients' experiences in areas of occupation, and the importance of context on occupational performance integrate with each other (i.e., the OT process in support of occupational participation). As the

student's understanding of the OT process grows, he or she begins the journey to becoming an integrated practitioner.

The commencement of this journey to become an integrated practitioner is represented by the spiral emerging from the overlap of the three circles; it is where the student starts "putting it all together" and clinical reasoning is born. Initially, the relationships between these elements of knowledge and experience are not very clear to the student and so the emerging spiral arrow is gray and not well defined. As the student progresses through the curriculum and repeats the cycle of foundational knowledge, experiential education, and practical education and learns more of the depth and breadth of the occupational therapy domain and process, his or her reasoning becomes solidified and this growing competence is symbolized by the darkening of the arrow and its more clearly defined edges.

As the student completes fieldwork and develops visionary and innovative practice programs, not only is the knowledge more completely integrated, but nearing graduation, she or he is able to see OT's role in supporting people's participation in life, society, and occupation. At this point, the student fully grasps the unique contribution that OT can make to people's lives, to occupational justice, and to our health care system. Thus acknowledging the humanistic and scientific factors that contribute to effective clinical reasoning, the student graduates as an integrated practitioner, yet whose spiraling arrow continues in the lifelong learning process called OT practice; ever refining their reasoning skills and ever seeking opportunities to enhance the quality of life and participation of those that they serve.