

## Chapter V

### PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

As a student occupational therapist enrolled in an academic program, you have many opportunities to participate in professional organizations at the national, state, and local level. Involvement in and support of your professional associations and community organizations is essential in the ways that these institutions affect the future of your chosen profession. Through legislative and community interaction, professional associations determine how the profession will grow and develop. In order to secure your own future, participation in and support of these associations is your professional responsibility and is in your best interest. In addition, participation and interaction at the national, state, and local levels of occupational therapy professional organizations provides the opportunity to network with other professionals, participate in continuing education opportunities and develop essential leadership skills. This section discusses four primary professional associations that provide you with many opportunities to contribute and develop professional skills: a) the Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) at Pacific University, b) the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), and c) the Occupational Therapy Association of Oregon (OTAO) and the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT). Additionally, there are also several School and University community positions described that provide additional opportunities to foster professional development and leadership skills.

#### **Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA)**

The Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) of Pacific University was established to unite and affiliate, into one organization, all Pacific University students interested in occupational therapy. Through an organizational structure which mirrors OTAO and AOTA, the Association facilitates the promotion of occupational therapy for the benefit and welfare of the student, the academic community, and the public. SOTA maintains and utilizes a close relationship with both OTAO and AOTA. At the beginning of each academic year, a general orientation to SOTA will be provided. The bylaws of SOTA are provided in chapter VI, along with an organizational description. Take an active role in SOTA to be sure that your voice is heard, to learn more about your profession, and to optimize interactions with other professional students at Pacific.

#### **American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)**

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) is our national professional organization. It provides advocacy for our profession; standards for practice and education; extensive continuing education opportunities; information and consultation services; affordable professional liability insurance and other insurance programs; opportunities for professional growth and recognition; information for grants, loans, and scholarships; access to job advertisement;

subscriptions to weekly and monthly periodicals, including the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* and *OT Practice*; and much more. Annual student membership is required—see AOTA website ([www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)), or the AOTA brochure/application for further information.

All first year students will receive an introduction to AOTA during the fall semester of the first academic year. In addition to meeting with the state representatives to AOTA, students will receive information regarding the role of students within the national association and benefits of membership. Students are required to join AOTA and to actively participate in order to have full access to AJOT, OT Practice and participate at the national level.

**Assembly of Student Delegates (ASD)**: The membership of the Assembly of Student Delegates (ASD) is made up of the student members of AOTA. Annually, a delegate is elected from the School of OT to represent the School at the ASD Pre-Conference Delegate Meetings (prior to the Annual AOTA spring conference). ASD provides a mechanism for the expression of student concerns, and offers a means whereby students can have effective input into the affairs of AOTA. As a standing committee of the Executive Board, the ASD Steering Committee represents the student point of view to each of these subgroups of the AOTA, the Executive Board, the Representative Assembly, the Commission on Practice, the Commission on Education, and all other bodies of AOTA as needed.

**National officers** Leadership opportunities are also available annually when nominations for national officers of ASD are solicited. Since 1987, six students from Pacific University have been elected to national office within the student assembly. Look for information posted on the SOTA bulletin board or talk with the SOTA advisor for more information.

### **Occupational Therapy Association of Oregon (OTAO)**

The Occupational Therapy Association of Oregon (OTAO) provides many benefits to its members, such as *Viewpoint*, a monthly newsletter; a listing in and copy of the state membership directory; opportunities to meet and interact with others in the OT profession; job placement information; continuing education events; professional representation for legislative and reimbursement issues; access to public relations materials; eligibility for office and committee positions; eligibility for OTAO awards and service recognition pins; occupational therapist (OT) and occupational therapy assistant (OTA) student scholarships; and much more. Membership in OTAO requires a nominal fee for students.

All first year students will receive an introduction to OTAO during the fall term of the first academic year. In addition to meeting representatives from OTAO, students will receive information regarding the role of the student within the state association and benefits of membership. Students are strongly encouraged to join the state association and to actively participate. See OTAO website ([www.otao.com](http://www.otao.com)) for more information.

**Student positions** SOTA has two elected representative positions on OTAO committees that provide opportunities for professional interactions and development

of leadership skills: a) Student representative to the Executive Committee, and b) Student representative to the OTA/O committee that plans the annual state conference. Refer to the SOTA bylaws in chapter VI or speak to SOTA leaders for further information.

### **World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT)**

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) promotes occupational therapy as an art and science internationally. The Federation supports the development, use and practice of occupational therapy worldwide, demonstrating its relevance and contribution to society.

WFOT maintains liaison with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international (non-governmental) health organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, INIA, Rehabilitation International (RI), International Council on Disability (ICOD) and the WORLD confederation of Physical Therapists (WCPT) with whom WFOT has full professional relationship. There are currently (2007) 59 member associations. WFOT is funded through subscriptions from national associations and individual members. Donations and bequests are welcomed. See WFOT website ([www.wfot.org](http://www.wfot.org)) for more information.

Organization membership -A country which has an occupational therapy association with an approved constitution and educational program may become a full member of WFOT.

Associate membership- A country with an approved constitution can become an associate member of WFOT.

Individual membership -Through their national organizations, qualified occupational therapists and occupational therapy students can become individual members of WFOT and receive the WFOT Bulletin.

### **Pacific University and School of OT**

There are numerous opportunities for professional development and contribution within the University at large as well as within the School of Occupational Therapy. A brief description of these positions is provided.

**Pre-OT Club** Students from Pacific University College of Arts and Sciences initiated a Pre-OT Club that is supported through the Student Life Office. The School of OT provides this club with two individuals who act as liaisons between the School and the Pre-OT Club: 1) SOTA Advisor, and 2) one School of OT student identified as the Pre-OT advisor. The SOTA membership elects the Pre-OT advisor.

**Pacific University committees** The Pacific University community's organizational structure provides for student representatives on many committees and levels of administration. These student positions offer the professional student opportunities to develop further his or her leadership and organizational skills and foster the student's understanding of systems. Occupational therapy students are

encouraged to contact the University Dean of Student Services to obtain position descriptions and standard operating procedures of the following committees in order to determine interest and participation.

- Admissions and Financial Aid Committee
- ASPU Executive Committee
- Curriculum and Standards Committee
- Library Committee
- Peer Review Board
- Professional Programs Council or PPC (SOTA elected position)
- Student Judicial Council
- Student Appeals Board
- University Board of Trustees
- University Budget Advisory Committee