

Chapter V

PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

As a student occupational therapist enrolled in a doctoral 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 d) 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 generally follows the structure of 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 of the handbook, 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), 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, an OT research database, 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. A delegate from each class is elected from the School of OT, some of whom will 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. (See SOTA Bylaws for more information on ASD delegate elections.) Serving as an ASD representative is an excellent introduction to the profession's national operations, and the AOTA leadership is composed of many OTs who were former ASD representatives.

Running for **National ASD Office**: Leadership opportunities are also available annually when nominations for national officers of ASD are solicited. Since 1987, seven 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; 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) for more information.

Student OTAO 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 OTAO committee that plans the annual state conference. Refer to the SOTA bylaws in chapter VI or speak to SOTA leaders for further information. Pacific graduates regularly serve in the OTAO leadership, and their pathways into these roles often include volunteer activities that began while they were students.

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 collaborates closely 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 relationships. As of 2012 there were 73 member-nation associations. WFOT is funded through subscriptions from national associations and individual members. Donations and bequests are welcomed. See WFOT website (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. Student members are welcomed.

Society for the Study of Occupation: USA (SSO: USA)

The Society for the Study of Occupation is a research society that strives to build the body of knowledge in occupational science to benefit humanity. Student members are welcome and can contribute to the annual research

conference by presenting occupational science research. Occupational science is a multidisciplinary field though it has a strong connection to occupational therapy and has helped advance the field through application of occupational science findings. Learn more at <http://www.sso-usa.org>

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.

Ambassadors Club Students from the School of Occupational Therapy interested in expanding and promoting the field of occupational therapy by serving as a School Ambassador. Ambassadors reach out to those interested in the field through education about the profession and their personal experiences of participation in the School of Occupational Therapy. Members also support the needs of the admissions office for organization and development of introducing the OT program to potential students and others interested in learning about the profession or the school. A number of additional opportunities are available for service to the school through the Ambassadors Club.

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.

Professional Student Senate The Professional Student Senate (PSS) is the body within the University's governance structure representing graduate and professional students. Senators are the voice of the students and act to express concerns and foster inter professional development between programs and the University as a whole. Each program appoints two senators to the student senate. They work to support students through the distribution of hardship, graduation, research, professional and inter professional development funds. PSS also plans social events, acts as a forum for student ideas, and provides a link between all the professional programs. Senators also are appointed to university committees giving students a voice across the institution. The Professional Student Senate (PSS) professional program representatives include members from the schools or colleges of:

- Audiology
- Dental Health Science
- Education
- Occupational Therapy
- Optometry
- Pharmacy
- Physical Therapy
- Physician Assistant Studies

Professional Psychology
Speech and Language Pathology

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 Dean of Students to obtain position descriptions and standard operating procedures of the following committees in order to determine interest and participation.

- Financial Committee
- Curriculum and Standards Committee
- Student Conduct Board
- Student Appellate Board
- University Board of Trustees

The following committees require a member from the Professional Programs (but not necessarily OT):

- University Sustainability Committee
- University Technology Committee
- University Diversity Committee
- Judicial Oversight (must be a member of Student Conduct Board)
- University Health and Safety