

Program Review Executive Summary

Occupational Therapy Assistant

Majors Reviewed:

- *Occupational Therapy Assistant,
A.A.S.*

August 2011



The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program has been in operation since the first class was admitted in 1986. It has a strong history of success for graduates who have done well on the National Certification Exam and found productive employment in diverse areas of practice in health care, education and community services. Strengths are consistently cited as a diverse, experienced, and knowledgeable faculty, a curriculum that keeps pace with current trends in the profession, state of the art physical facilities, and diverse fieldwork experiences. The Program has been consistently honored with full accreditation since 1987.

Graduates have provided valuable feedback via course evaluations, Level II Fieldwork Evaluations, and Graduate Focus Groups that has been used to enhance the curriculum. Fieldwork Educators represent a large and diverse group of clinicians who through their roles of student supervision, act to communicate strength and weaknesses of student performance, knowledge, and skills. Additionally, the collaborative relationships established with these clinicians allow the OTA Program to keep abreast of current trends and issues in practice. Program review has been a collaborative process of staff, faculty, Clinical Educators, Advisory Committee, and students. Program Evaluation is an ongoing process that examines data and feedback from multiple sources including SWOT Analysis, course, fieldwork, graduation, and employer evaluation tools, annual graduate focus groups, weekly staff meetings, biannual staff Retreats, and annual Advisory Committee Meetings.

Accreditation Standards however, demands more specific objective data related to graduate outcomes, job placement, and employer satisfaction. The Program commonly receives a good bit of anecdotal information; however objective data is more difficult to procure. Traditional survey formats sent both from the OTA Program Office as well as others from the now named Assessment Research and Planning (ARP) Office has resulted in too small an "N" to be considered as significant data for any decision making. Current staff of ARP has been most helpful and open to establishing alternate processes to produce reliable data.

Projected Goals:

- Establish revised plans with ARP to procure graduate and employer satisfaction data for adequate OTA Program Evaluation.

Enrollment has been steady. Even through years that other OTA Programs in Pennsylvania and across the country were experiencing severe stress and closure, the Penn College OTA Program was able to maintain enrollment adequate to support its costs. Enhanced recruitment efforts in addition to the return of strong employment projections over the last 4 years have resulted in some growth of the applicant pool. Program admissions have accepted a full capacity of students over the last 3 years, with numbers of prospects continuing to steadily increase.

Students in the OTA Major demonstrate a varied level of academic and personal maturity as competition through the Health Sciences Ranking System is minimal as compared to other majors in the School. A less qualified student requires more investment of time from faculty, staff, and advisors. The College and OTA Program vision is to provide a student-centered environment and an abundance of hands-on opportunities becomes strained as students require more focused one-one-one time to meet objectives.

Projected Goals:

- Continue enhanced recruitment and advisement initiatives to grow an applicant pool with stronger skills in math and science (a key correlate with OTA Program success.)
- Develop enhanced recruitment efforts to educate prospects on careers in occupational therapy.
- Explore mechanisms to enhance professional behaviors and academic maturity of students.

Of greatest concern secondary to growing numbers is a 60% increase in the number of Level I and Level II Placements required over the last 4 years. This is placing a severe strain on contracted sites who simultaneously are struggling to maintain compliance with a growing number of governmental and reimbursement restrictions related to student supervision. 27% of the Program credits are reliant upon fieldwork placements. Vulnerability of this aspect of the Program results in a dangerous threat to the integrity of the curriculum design.

Projected Goals:

- Expand SWOT analysis to produce more quantified data related to external threats related to the fieldwork components of the curriculum.
- Ensure that fieldwork agreements are sufficient in scope and number to allow completion of graduation requirements.[ACOTE Standard B.10.8]
- Per above, establish guidelines for class capacities that will comply with the community resources available to meet Program objectives.