

Mission, Vision and Purpose of the Program

Mission:

The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program will provide occupational therapy educational opportunities that empower students to achieve their personal, academic and career goals and that promote life-long learning for all communities served.

Vision:

Through visionary leadership, outstanding teaching, and high quality service, Navarro College and the OTA faculty will provide students the skills necessary for critical thinking, occupational therapy practices, and the professional responsibilities needed to provide occupational therapy to individuals seeking to increase participation in daily life, regardless of the setting. Students will be prepared to engage in higher levels of education, leadership, and employment.

Purpose:

The Navarro College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program seeks to provide a culturally diverse pool of occupational therapy assistants by serving the students and communities of the service district. In 2013, the program added an additional location on the Midlothian campus to meet the growing population needs of the service district and surrounding areas. The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program encourages students to explore and set goals based on life-long learning regardless of previous educational opportunities. The OTA Program encourages personal and professional responsibility, flexibility, and creativity in developing the skills needed to practice as an occupational therapy assistant in entry-level practice areas. Ongoing program evaluation is regarded as an essential element in determining how effectively the program achieves the purposes stated above.

Philosophical Beliefs of the Program

View of Humanity

All humans have a desire to actively explore and master their environment and the activities/occupations that occur within these environments. When an individual is able to master his/her environment and participate in meaningful occupations, he or she derives a sense of self-fulfillment and self-identity.

Adaptation is a lifelong process that must occur in order for humans to experience mastery within their environment. Dysfunction occurs when this process is hindered. Purposeful activity facilitates the adaptive process.

Regardless of health status, age, culture or social condition, personal life choices, or personal challenges, each individual has the inherent right to participate in personally meaningful occupations to fulfill individual needs and one's life roles.

Approach to Learning

Learning is a process that is not taught but facilitated. To facilitate the development of each student's highest potential (mastery within his/her environment), the educator must create an environment that encourages experimentation and practice. There needs to be an accepting, supportive, and safe learning environment where the dignity and worth of each student is respected and celebrated. We acknowledge the unique nature of life experiences and appreciate the role of cultural diversity and their impact on the adult learner. It is our responsibility to provide a variety of learning experiences that match these life experiences.

Students must be active participants in this process. This includes being able to connect new learning with previous life experiences. Learning is integrated more effectively when information is seen by the student as being relevant and useful. Students learn best if they learn for understanding rather than for recall of isolated facts.

Students demonstrate mastery within their environment by demonstrating strong critical thinking skills and communication skills for collaboration with clients and other professionals, while exercising the highest level of responsible behavior. Students must use evidence-based practice and commit to becoming life-long learners to maintain the skills required in the profession.

Philosophical Framework for Learning

The students attending the Navarro College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program are typically older than the traditional college student. Most students continue to work full-time or part-time while enrolled full-time in the program. Many are managing young families or caring for older parents. Life experiences of our students vary dramatically due to the above factors and the large geographic location the College serves. We acknowledge and appreciate the varied roles each student assumes. To meet the learning needs of our students, the program relies heavily upon constructs outlined in the Adult Learner Model (Knowles, 1973). These include recognition that students learn in various ways, that students have a desire to pursue and master individual learning, and that new learning must be connected to previous life experiences. The program also relies on constructs from experiential learning or “learning by doing”, which enables students to actively participate in a concrete experience followed by reflection of the experience and ending with an application of the concept for deeper understanding (Association for Experiential Education, 2008).

Instructional methods and measurements of competence must incorporate various student learning styles. Faculty members strive to incorporate kinesthetic, visual, and auditory learning experiences into courses within the curriculum. The course flow is designed to allow lab, lecture, and fieldwork experiences to occur simultaneously, using learning objectives as a thread. Students are able to listen to a concept/technique introduced during lecture. The laboratory provides students with the opportunity to practice and explore the concept/technique. Fieldwork experiences reinforce the concept/technique, allowing students to observe and practice selected aspects of the concept/technique. The cycle is completed as the student participates in group discussion during lectures with a faculty member acting as a facilitator to integrate the concept/technique. Experiential learning experiences and service-based learning experiences are built into each laboratory course of the curriculum and through events sponsored by the Student Occupational Therapy Association.

Program faculty and the fieldwork coordinator work together to build and develop courses and corresponding fieldwork experiences to ensure a variety of methods are utilized in the presentation of course material. Faculty development plans encourage faculty members to advance knowledge of effective teaching strategies and techniques to enhance student learning.

Student competency is established through a variety of criteria which include but are not limited to written and computer-based examinations, research papers, written treatment plans/task analysis, skill demonstration, individual/group projects and presentations, and self/peer evaluation.

Program faculty members encourage ongoing student feedback throughout the semester regarding the effectiveness of delivery methods of course material. Students have a formal opportunity to provide written feedback to instructor(s) at the conclusion of each semester through an electronic evaluation form.