Navarro College Occupational Therapy Assistant Curriculum

**Context of the Institution**

Navarro College is a public comprehensive two-year community college providing education for a five county service district in rural central Texas. Chartered in Corsicana, Texas (Navarro County) in 1946, the College operates under the policies established by the Texas Higher Educational Coordinating Board (THECB) and under the direction of the Navarro College Board of Trustees with publicly elected members representing the service district.

Annual enrollment in Navarro College has exceeded 11,000 students in courses that are offered during the day, in the evening, on weekends, and online. The College provides a variety of certificate and associate degree educational programs. Degrees include terminal degrees enabling students to enter the work force and transfer degrees for students pursuing higher education. Navarro College has a long history in serving the needs of local businesses and industries by providing technical, educational, or continuing education opportunities to promote employment and personal growth in the citizens of the service area. Navarro College has partnered with Texas A&M University Commerce to offer bachelor- and master-level courses on the Navarro College campus.

Navarro College is fully accredited by the Commission on Colleges and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and holds numerous programmatic accreditations as well.

**Mission of the Program**

The Navarro College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program supports and subscribes to the purpose, mission and philosophy of Navarro College.

**Our Quest:**
The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program is dedicated to preparing students for successful careers as occupational therapy practitioners. We pursue wisdom, truth, and knowledge for our students and ourselves.

**Our Vision:**
Through visionary leadership, outstanding teaching, and high quality service, Navarro College will provide students the technical skills in 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.

**Our Purpose:**
The Navarro College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program seeks to provide a culturally diverse pool of occupational therapy assistants by serving the students of the rural service district, adjoining urban areas, and the larger global community. 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. Program research is regarded as an essential element in determining how effectively it 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 occupational 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 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 the learning 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
every course in 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
in a variety of settings, allowing students to observe and practice selected aspects of the
concept/technique. The cycle is completed as the student participates in group discussion during
seminar 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 feedback
form.

**Ability-Based Outcomes**

Program and student outcomes have been established that reflect the mission and vision of both the
Navarro College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program and the occupational therapy profession, as
outlined by the American Occupational Therapy Association. Upon completion of the program,
graduates will have met the established student outcomes and demonstrated competency and
proficiency in the following knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

**Program Outcomes**

1. To prepare student for entry-level practice as competent and ethical occupational therapy
   practitioners, who creatively use occupation appropriately to diverse populations and
   environments.
2. To provide a challenging curriculum that meets the demands of current practice and
   prepares students to meet the expectations of future practice.
3. To foster the development of a value system that includes the uniqueness, dignity, and the
   rights of the individual and support engagement in meaningful occupations.
4. To create an atmosphere that encourages safe exploration of personal and professional
   attitudes and behaviors.
5. To develop professional behaviors in the student that are congruent with the core values of the profession of occupational therapy.

6. To provide opportunities for faculty, students, fieldwork educators, alumni, and program stakeholders to have direct input into the development and evaluation of all aspects of the program.

7. To provide ongoing evaluation and planning processes to ensure the mission of the program is being accomplished.

**Student Outcomes**

1. Deliver occupational therapy assistant services at entry-level competency with the ability to work in a diverse and changing health care environment or health promotion environment under the supervision of an occupational therapist.

2. Demonstrate sound judgment and practice in safety to self and others in all academic, community, clinical, or fieldwork related activities.

3. Utilize a variety of resources to increase professional competency or general knowledge, including participation in professional associations and evidence-based practice.

4. Collaborate effectively with clients, caregivers, and other health care professionals, demonstrating an appreciation of diversity.

5. Use clinical reasoning to provide occupational therapy interventions which are occupation-based, evidence based, and client centered.

6. Identify personal and professional strengths and challenges in order to set goals based on life-long learning.

7. Articulate the importance of advocacy for the client and promotion of the occupational therapy.

8. Demonstrate an awareness of the roles of creativity, flexibility, and therapeutic rapport in the delivery of occupational therapy services.

9. Document occupational therapy services consistent with the laws, rules, and regulations governing occupational therapy practice.

**Curriculum Design**

The curriculum design of the Navarro College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program affirms the uniqueness of each student and appreciates the influential nature of student life experiences and the role these experiences play in shaping student learning. A developmental model is used that progresses the content from simple to complex, allowing students to build upon previously learned information and furthering life experiences, eventually translating into new learning experiences. Similarly, content is presented using a lifespan approach, first focusing on “normal” occupational performance and social participation from infancy through productive aging and then by focusing on challenges to (abnormal) occupational performance and social participation due to disease, injury, or lack of opportunity. Final courses during the last semester act as a bridge to Level II fieldwork, exposing students to problem-based scenarios, and require advanced problem solving skills and clinical reasoning skills.

The curriculum is designed to meet the requirements of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Students must complete all courses outlined in the curriculum. General education requirements are an integral part of the program and provide the student with a foundation in the areas of humanities/fine arts, communication, computer science, math, social/behavioral science, and composition.
Students complete the program on a full-time basis following the curriculum design as developed by the faculty. Online content is used when possible for the lecture portion of occupational therapy courses to allow flexibility for students managing roles outside of the College. Program faculty members seek to develop online and in-class content that presents learning material in a variety of formats (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) to meet the needs of adult learners. Experiential learning and service learning opportunities are built into laboratory courses and through events scheduled by the Student Occupational Therapy Association.

The course descriptions and course outcomes are mandated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). This agency created the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM), which lists and describes all courses for OTA curriculums within the State of Texas. Each OTA program selects from the listing courses most appropriate to its curriculum design. In accordance with Navarro College accreditation standards, OTA courses must also contain measureable learning outcomes aimed at preparing the student for the work environment.

Major curriculum threads are woven throughout each level of the program. They are introduced and reinforced throughout coursework with increasing complexity. They serve to focus the curriculum coursework to highlight knowledge, skills, and abilities that have been identified as important by the profession, program faculty, Navarro College, and the community. These threads include:

- Professional Behavior
- Personal Responsibility and Leadership
- Lifelong Learning
- Evidence-Based Practice
- Advocacy
- Promotion of Profession
- Critical Thinking/Clinical Reasoning
- Awareness of Cultural Diversity
- Effective Communication
- Collaboration Within a Team

The nature of health care and the profession of occupational therapy require that practitioners continuously look to the future. As new advances and developments in practice occur, individuals must be able to adapt to these advances by acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to better serve the designated population. Similarly, the program curriculum design is future-oriented in that it addresses the need for and benefit of evidence-based practice and the concept of lifelong learning. Students are exposed to these concepts the first semester and are given the tools, training, and resources to seek and utilize evidence-based resources. These skills are reinforced and improved during subsequent semesters.

Students and faculty members are strongly encouraged to be active participants and assume leadership roles in local, state, and national associations to promote the profession of occupational therapy. Global connections are enhanced between practitioners and other health care professionals by participation in associations and are necessary to remain current in health care trends and practices.

Students and faculty members must be able to appreciate and understand the role cultural diversity plays in health care, including the diversity of clients and the workforce, as trends indicate increasing diversity in the service area and surrounding areas. Service learning opportunities are designed to
introduce students to cultural diversity, including assisting athletes participating in the Special Olympics, reading to Veterans in a local hospital, performing community mental health screenings in conjunction with a local organization, and participating in a summer camp for children with physical challenges. Service-based learning opportunities promote student professional behaviors, enhance a sense of personal responsibility, encourage collaboration within a team, refine communication skills, and develop clinical reasoning skills.

Fieldwork and Curriculum Design

The fieldwork program is designed to be integrated fully into the curriculum design of the program. Learning is a cycle that requires reinforcement of concepts through “hands-on” delivery methods. Fieldwork is the link between a concept and its application to practice. Curricular threads are identified each semester for emphasis in fieldwork. These threads are interwoven between lectures, laboratories, fieldwork experiences, and seminars to maximize transfer of learning. Fieldwork sites are carefully selected based on their ability to address the curricular threads.

Fieldwork educators are active participants in this process through participation in advisory committee meetings, fieldwork site visits, opportunities for adjunct teaching and guest lectures, providing electronic feedback via surveys, and through electronic communication, including podcasts, emails and social networking sites. The program actively recruits former students familiar with the curriculum design to serve as fieldwork educators, encouraging promotion of the profession through fieldwork education.

Prerequisites, Content, and Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prerequisites</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Health Professions</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anatomy &amp; Physiology I</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Semester</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Principles of Occupational Therapy</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composition and Rhetoric</td>
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<td>Microcomputer Applications</td>
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<td>General Psychology</td>
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<td>Occupational Performance Through Lifespan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Structure and Function in OT</td>
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<td>Pathophysiology</td>
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<td>Approved Speech Elective</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Third Semester</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Use of Occupations or Activities I</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupational Performance Birth - Adolescence</td>
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<td>Clinical in OTA I – Pediatric Level I Fieldwork</td>
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Fourth Semester

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<tr>
<td>Occupational Performance Adulthood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Use of Occupations or Activities II</td>
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Fifth Semester

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<tr>
<td>Mental Health in OT</td>
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<td>Clinical in OTA III – Mental Health Level I Fieldwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Interventions II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approved Fine Arts/Humanities Elective</td>
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Sixth Semester

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<tr>
<td>Practicum OTA II – Level II Fieldwork</td>
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Occupational Therapy Assistant Courses

First Semester

Principles of Occupational Therapy
This course will provide an introduction to occupational therapy including the historical development and philosophy. Emphasis is on the roles of the occupational therapy assistant. Topics include occupation in daily life; education and functions; OT personnel; current health care environment; moral, legal, and ethical issues; communication in OT, including service documentation. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 4 hours (2 hours lec/4 hours lab/week).

Second Semester

Occupational Performance throughout the Lifespan
This course will focus on general principles of occupational therapy throughout the lifespan. The student will learn to identify and adapt age appropriate occupations; identify the client factors that affect occupational performance; select appropriate intervention strategies for this population; and adapt contexts to support occupational performance. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 3 hours (2 hours lec/4 hours lab/week).

Human Structure and Function in Occupational Therapy
A study of the biomechanics of human motion. Emphasis is on the musculoskeletal system including skeletal structure, muscles and nerves, and biomechanical assessment procedures. Students also are introduced to muscle testing and goniometric testing procedures. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 3 hours (2 hours lec/4 hours lab/week).
Third Semester

Therapeutic Use of Occupations or Activities I
Various occupations or activities used as therapeutic interventions in occupational therapy with pediatric/adolescent populations. Emphasis on awareness of activity demands, contexts, adapting, grading, and safe implementation of occupations or activities for the pediatric population. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 3 hours (2 hours lec/3 hours lab/week).

Occupational Performance from Birth through Adolescence
This course focuses on the occupational performance of newborns through adolescents. Topics include frames of reference, evaluation tools and techniques, and intervention strategies specific to this population. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 3 hours (2 hours lec/4 hours lab/week).

Clinical in OTA I – Pediatric Level I Fieldwork
A health-related work-based learning experience that enables the student to apply specialized occupational theory, skills, and concepts in settings serving children or adolescents. Direct supervision is provided by the clinical educator or faculty at health care, education, or community settings. The in-class seminar complements topics and experiences that occur on off-campus sites. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 1 hour (0/96).

Fourth Semester

Therapeutic Interventions I
Concepts, techniques, and assessments leading to proficiency in skills and activities used as treatment interventions in occupational therapy. Emphasizes the occupational therapy assistant’s role in the process. The focus is on preparatory methods to enhance occupational performance. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 3 hours (2 hours lec/4 hours lab/week).

Occupational Performance of Adulthood
This course is the study of occupational performance of adults. Topics include frames of reference, evaluation tools and techniques, and intervention strategies specific to this population. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 3 hours (2 hours lec/4 hours lab/week).

Therapeutic Use of Occupations or Activities II
This course emphasizes advanced techniques and applications used in traditional and non-traditional practiced settings. The student will plan, select, and implement activities to help meet the needs of the adult populations treated in occupational therapy and adapt activities for identified functional needs. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 4 hours (2 hours lec/6 hours lab/week).

Clinical in OTA II – Adult Level I Fieldwork
A health-related work-based learning experience that enables the student to apply specialized occupational theory, skills, and concepts in settings serving adults with challenges hindering occupational performance. Direct supervision is provided by the clinical educator or faculty at health care, education, or community settings. The in-class seminar complements topics and experiences that occur on off-campus sites. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 1 hour (0/96).
Fifth Semester

**Health Care Management in Occupational Therapy**
This course explores the role of the occupational therapy assistant in health care delivery. Topics include documentation and reimbursement, credentialing, occupational therapy standards and ethics, health care team role delineation, and management of resources, including environment, personnel, and budget. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 2 hours (1 hour lec/3 hours lab/week).

**Mental Health in Occupational Therapy**
Promotion of mental health and wellness through occupational therapy. Topics include theory and intervention strategies to enhance occupational performance. This course emphasizes mental health frames of reference, identification of occupational therapy assessment strategies, explanation of psychiatric diagnoses based on the DSM, and implementation of occupation-based interventions (2 hours lec/4 hours lab/ week).

**Clinical in OTA III – Mental Health Fieldwork**
A health-related work-based learning experience that enables the student to apply specialized occupational theory, skills, and concepts in settings serving children and adults with psychosocial challenges. Direct supervision is provided by the clinical educator or faculty at health care, education, or community settings. The in-class seminar complements topics and experiences that occur on off-campus sites. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 1 hour (0/96).

**Therapeutic Interventions II**
This course emphasizes current rehabilitative interventions across the lifespan and in both traditional and non-traditional treatment settings. Topics include strategies to enhance occupational performance and assess interventions to achieve the established goals. Upon successful completion of this course, the student will earn 3 hours (2 hours lec/3 hours lab/week).

Sixth Semester

**Practicum in OTA I – Level II Fieldwork**
Practical, general workplace training supported by an individualized learning plan developed by the employer, college, and student. As outlined in the learning plan, the student will apply the theory, concepts, and skills involving specialized materials, tools, equipment, procedures, regulations, laws, and interactions within and among political, economic, environmental, social, and legal systems associated with the occupation and the business/industry and will demonstrate legal and ethical behavior, safety practices, interpersonal and teamwork skills, and appropriate written and verbal communication skills using the terminology of the occupation and the business/industry. Upon successful completion of the course, the student will earn 3 hours (0/336).

**Practicum in OTA II – Level II Fieldwork**
Practical, general workplace training supported by an individualized learning plan developed by the employer, college, and student. As outlined in the learning plan, the student will apply the theory, concepts, and skills involving specialized materials, tools, equipment, procedures, regulations, laws, and interactions within and among political, economic, environmental, social, and legal systems associated with the occupation and the business/industry and will demonstrate legal and ethical behavior, safety practices, interpersonal and teamwork skills, and appropriate written and verbal communication skills
using the terminology of the occupation and the business/industry. Upon successful completion of the course, the student will earn 3 hours (0/336).

**Learning Strategies**

The underlying instructional theme follows the premise that individuals derive a sense of self-fulfillment from mastery and a sense of self-identify from participation in meaningful occupations or activities. This concept is also reflected in the instructional process as the program draws from various philosophies and theories, including strategies from experiential learning, problem-based learning, and adult learning. Concepts from experiential learning incorporated into the curriculum include three phases: the concrete experience of “doing”, a period of contemplation and reflection, and application to deepen an understanding of the concept. The adult learner model assumes that adult learners “want to learn today what they can use tomorrow” and that life experiences will influence a student’s readiness for learning.

The developmental model is used to organize course flow and learning. Students with deficiencies in reading, writing, or math skills take remedial coursework to prepare them for college-level learning. Prerequisite courses in biological science and health professions orientation prepare students to enter and perform successfully in a health professions program. General academic requirements provide the student a foundation in the areas of humanities/fine arts, communication, computer science, math, social/behavioral science, and composition. Technical courses follow, providing the students with a foundation in medical terminology and pathophysiology of common health conditions.

The initial program-specific course introduces students to history, philosophy, and basic tenets of occupational therapy; roles of the occupational therapy assistant; current health care environment; moral, legal, and ethical issues; communication, including service documentation; and the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework. Using experiential learning, the student is able to practice and demonstrate basic patient care skills with an opportunity for peer and instructor feedback.

The ensuing program-specific course introduces the student to age-appropriate occupations from a lifespan perspective and task analysis. Using experiential learning, students have the opportunity to participate in selected occupations and develop written task analyses. Using a problem-based approach, students develop a piece of adaptive equipment based upon a client problem outlined in a case study. Students are expected to apply information from previous semesters demonstrating improved clinical reasoning and insight.

A lifespan approach is utilized to present course content the following two semesters, beginning with birth through adolescence and continuing through the aging adult. Course content related to psychiatric diagnoses are presented during the final semester. Each practice areas course presents theory and frames of references, evaluation tools and techniques, and intervention strategies appropriate to the population, using the occupational therapy process as a guide. Occupational performance and role acquisition are reinforced through a “hands-on” co-requisite course, interweaving concepts. Level I fieldwork is also required as a co-requisite. Course assignments are designed to integrate concepts between classroom and clinical experiences. Students have an opportunity to develop a treatment plan and demonstrate the intervention based upon a similar case observed in fieldwork, researching and incorporating an evidence-based practice method.

Final courses, including management and an advanced interventions course, act as a bridge to Level II fieldwork. Students are exposed to problem-based learning scenarios to challenge their clinical reasoning skills and problem solving skills. Experiential learning experiences occur through group and
individual projects which include space planning and budget analysis, development of a strategic plan for a given organization, ADA evaluation of a public building, and designing a community-based wellness program.

Level II fieldwork marks the transition between student and entry-level practitioner. Students complete 16 weeks of supervised general workplace training supported by an individualized learning plan developed by the employer, College, and student. The student will have the opportunity apply newly acquired skills and concepts within traditional and non-traditional occupational therapy settings. Students are required to participate in a weekly seminar conducted online, in which students are required to comment on discussion postings. This encourages collaboration and feedback between students and the fieldwork educator.