



Occupational Therapy Newsletter Spring
2023 Vol. II Issue III



Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Message from the Chair and Program Director



1 - Sharon M McCloskey, EDD, MBA, OT/L, DipCOT, CTP

Welcome and Happy New Year to All,

I am delighted to share with you this issue of our OT Newsletter highlighting the activities and accomplishments of the Occupational Therapy Department at Sacred Heart University. These few feature articles profile the strengths and joy within our program, showcasing faculty, staff, students, and alumni engaged in teaching, learning, and scholarship over the past six months.

In August 2022 we welcomed our new cohort of PY1 students. The Orientation Week of learning and activities hosted by faculty, staff, and PY2 student mentors, positioned the PY1 students for a very good start to their graduate studies. Both PY1 and PY2 students fully immersed themselves in learning, community engagement, and some fun during the Fall! Faculty continue to demonstrate their deep commitment to excellence and innovation in OT education, ensuring student delight and success in learning.

This past semester ended with some news about transition. Dr. Heather Kuhaneck has been invited as Founding Chair of a new occupational therapy program. She has made the tough decision to change direction in her career and move towards program design and administration. We are very happy for Heather, but of course, we are very sad for us, the SHU OT community. Please be sure to read the closing interview between Heather and Fiona (student editor).

I am extremely proud of all members of our OT community here at SHU. I hope you enjoy reading about some of activities, learning, service, and community engagement.

Dr. Sharon McCloskey

Department Chair and Program Director

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Vol. II Issue III of the Sacred Heart University (SHU) Occupational Therapy (OT) Newsletter!

The Occupational Therapy Graduate Program at SHU prides itself in being a program that allows the students to flourish both academically and experientially under brilliant faculty. We are thrilled to continue the tradition of sharing our OT newsletters within and surrounding the Sacred Heart community.

I am so grateful to have been a part of building this newsletter alongside my supervisor, Rebeca Giorgio, Department Coordinator. Thanks to her guidance and support I have been able to create this next edition of the newsletter. I would also like to thank the OT Department, both faculty and students, who have contributed their outstanding pieces.

On behalf of Dr. Sharon McCloskey, Chair and Program Director, Rebeca Giorgio, and myself, we thank you for reading.

Fiona Buckley, OT Public Relations Graduate Assistant

Sacred Heart University, OT Graduate Program



2 - Fiona Buckley, Public Relations GA

Farewell to Dr. Heather Kuhaneck, PhD, OTR/L



I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Heather Miller-Kuhaneck who is transitioning into the next step of her career. In my short time here as a graduate student in the Occupational Therapy program, it is evident the impact that Heather has made in her nearly 20 years at this institution of higher education. She is a renowned OT educator and scholar, and it was wonderful to have a conversation with her.

In 2003, Heather was welcomed to Sacred Heart University's OT program as an Assistant Professor. She had previously been working at an outpatient pediatric clinic. She expressed to me her love for having OT students which then led her to transition into academia. When Heather joined Sacred Heart there were only 9 students in the program. Over the past 19 years as an OT educator, the growth and program development that Heather has seen is immense. Seeing class sizes grow from just 9 to 60 students, and the evolution of the structure of the program she says has been wonderful to observe. Heather continued to grow during her tenure as the program grew progressing from Assistant Professor, to Associate Professor, to Full Professor. She was always fully engaged in teaching and scholarship, and

was always an active member of ConnOTA and AOTA. Being part of the growth of the SHU OT program had significant meaning for Heather. Seeing her students develop into amazing occupational therapy professionals and successful individuals, conducting research, presenting at AOTA conferences, are all the things that Heather feels proud of, no matter how big or small a part she may have contributed. Heather has loved engaging with students and seeing them become wonderful occupational therapists.

I asked Heather as she leaves Sacred Heart if she has any message she would like to leave her students and alumni. Her response was that as a student, it was instilled in her to keep learning, so she would like to instill in us - continue to learn, always, even beyond the scope of occupational therapy. She believes we should explore new things, seek new experiences, and broaden our knowledge in all areas of interest and learning as human beings engaged in doing. As she takes the next step on her professional path, Heather states she will miss most of all the amazing OT people and everyone at SHU. Luckily for us, she won't be too far away as she is staying in Connecticut.

I believe I can speak for everyone when I say that we are truly sad about losing a valuable member of the SHU OT community. We all wish Heather the very best of luck in her new position and extend the greatest thanks for her wonderful contribution to this program. I would like to personally thank Heather for her time in speaking with me as it was so nice to learn about her experience at Sacred Heart.

Fiona Buckley, OTS

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Enhancing Observational Skills- Yale Center for British Art



OT546 Human Occupation and Activity Analysis is a course about becoming a *detective* of the human condition, with emphasis on the 'what and how' people engage and participate in, the ordinary everyday activities and occupations of life.

During the Fall semester, the PY1 students participated in an out-of-the-classroom activity, "Enhancing Observational Skills", hosted by the Yale Center for British Art. This learning program was originally designed in 1998 for medical students to strengthen observation and communication skills through the study of original works of art in a museum setting. Dr. McCloskey and Linda Friedlaender (a curator at the Yale Museum) had previously worked together to tailor the design of the observational program for OT students. This year, students were accompanied by Prof. Morgan Villano, Drs. Amanda Wheeler and Sharon McCloskey. In determining the narrative of selected paintings, and exploring the differences between objective and subjective details, students had an opportunity to observe, analyze, collaborate, and discuss their impressions and findings. Guiding questions included "What do we think is happening in this scene?" "What can we tell just by looking at this painting?" "What can we assume based on what we see?" The OT students were able to hone observational skills, and engage socially and academically to learn about analysis from the unique perspective of looking at art.



3 - PY1s observing artwork in Yale Center for British Art

Assistive Technology Lab



4 - Students interacting with assistive technology



The PY2 students recently participated in an Assistive Technology Lab presented by guest lecturer Dr. Tina Weisman, OTD, OTR/L, Occupational Therapist, Supervisor of Cerebral Palsy of Westchester, and Project Design Consultant at Enabling Devices. Through the generosity of Enabling Devices, Dr. Weisman provided students with a very fun, hands-on learning experience.

During the pediatric semester, the OT students learned about the essential role of play in children's sensory motor, cognitive, and language development. Dr. Weisman's presentation included opportunities for our students to learn about and try out a variety of switch-operated play devices.

Students experienced adaptive toys through play, and learned how to meet some of the unique needs of children with special needs. The students learned about direct and indirect access and experimented with activating toys using a variety of switches and controls. Dr. Weisman explained and demonstrated how she works with her clients, together with the engineers and designers at Enabling Devices, to determine optimal toy and switch design to overcome barriers for children with a range of abilities. This hands-on learning experience expanded the OT students' knowledge in using assistive technology to increase accessibility for play and learning.

World Occupational Therapy Day



World Occupational Therapy Day is an annual event hosted by the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) on October 27th each year. World OT Day is a unique opportunity to unite the global occupational therapy community and share experiences with occupational therapy practitioners, students, educators, and the public around the world, and share some knowledge about the OT profession.

This year, the SHU OT program participated in World OT Day and the Occupational Therapy Global Day of Service (OTGDS). The OT students volunteered with a number of community service organizations. Some students engaged in direct action, giving of their time to community projects, and some students engaged in indirect action sharing information and educational materials. Service activities included fundraising, creating sensorimotor activity kits to be donated to early childhood settings, creating informational flyers, volunteering at gardens, and donating blood. These were just a few of the many wonderful examples that SHU OT students engaged in for this day of service and the promotion of the OT profession.



5 - Claire Radak, PY1, Jenna Zabenah, PY1 participating in a beach clean up.



6 - Samantha Amico, PY1, raised money and donated sensory integration bags to Blackham Elementary School.

The 'Just Right Challenge' Learning Project

The PY1 students recently completed the semester-long individual learning project in OT546 (activity analysis course led by Professor Morgan Villano and Professor Amanda Wheeler). In this assignment (designed by Dr. Sharon McCloskey), students are challenged to identify an activity, choose a craft, or

skill that is completely unfamiliar, and the students are required to learn an activity outside of class over the course of ten weeks.

The intended outcome of this project is to master a new and challenging activity in order to understand about learning, as well as conduct an analysis of some complex skills. The project is also designed with the intent that students gain a greater understanding of the importance and potential use of activities in promoting the health and well-being of their future clients. This year students selected a range of activities to learn and master - playing the Ukulele; handcrafts such as embroidery, sewing clothing, quilt-making, knitting and crochet; changing a car tire; learning to drive stick shift; arts such as pottery and macrame; and dance. Students reported that it was initially difficult to select a complex activity offering the 'just-right-challenge' for an adult learner, however, by the end of the semester students reported a "real sense of accomplishment" and "delight in learning."



'Shark Tank' – Business Plan Proposal Day



The OT607 Leadership and Management course includes a teaching and learning experience, Business Plan Development, that requires small groups of students to engage in the research and design of a comprehensive business/program proposal. The course culminates with a 'Shark Tank' style event. Student groups pitched their business plan ideas and received feedback from assigned peer panel members. A very fun event as students are excited about the competition! Another highlight of the Day was the special delivery of cookies from 'Big G Cookies' (George is a participant of Monday Night Social, and now has his own cookie business). Dr. Joan Sauvigne-Kirsch and Dr. Sharon McCloskey were very happy with the calibre of business plans this year.

Capstone Day 2022 and Student Awards



7 - Pictured left to right: Dr. Sharon McCloskey, Ashley Mackowski, Rachel Habib, Dr. Lola Halperin, and Kristi Pena

On December 14, 2022, the PY2 students delivered their formal poster presentations on the Capstone Projects. Faculty and students work in partnership in the design and execution of Capstone experiences over two semesters, either research papers or scholarly projects, culminating in the Capstone Day, 2022.

At the same event two student scholarships were awarded: The Christine Busher Award went to Rachel Habib and Ashley Mackowski. The Ellie and Lorry Weinstein Award was awarded to Kristi Pena. Warm congratulations to award recipients.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



8 - Lola Halperin, Ed.D., OTR/L

Research

Dr. Lola Halperin, Ed.D, OTR/L recently co-authored several published articles with other professionals and College of Health Professions (CHP) faculty:

Initial Steps for Integrating Academic Electronic Health Records Into Clinical Curricula of Physical and Occupational Therapy in the United States: A Survey-Based Observational Study¹

Halperin, L. & Waldman-Levi, A. (in press). Playing playfully to overcome adversity: A telehealth-based group teacher training program. *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*.

Podcast on "Mental Health and Well-Being of Occupational Therapy Students"

¹<https://www.jeehp.org/journal/view.php?doi=10.3352/jeehp.2022.19.24>

AOTA Academic Education Special Interest Section podcast with Prof. Sharon M. McCloskey.

McCloskey, S & Henderson, W. (Hosts). (2022, October 26). Mental Health and Well-Being of Occupational Therapy Graduate Students (No.1). [Audio podcast episode]. In *AESIS Podcast Series*, CommunOT, AOTA.

<https://communot.aota.org/viewdocument/aesis-monthly-podcast?CommunityKey=0ed191ce-87b0-41e3-b824-6c3baec8539b&tab=librarydocuments>

This podcast is available through AOTA CommunOT under AESIS (members only).



9 - Jaimee Betts Hegge, OTD, MSOT, OTR/L

Research

Dr. Jaimee Hegge is researching occupational therapy (OT) practitioners who specialize in pelvic floor conditions. Dr. Hegge is passionate about supporting new mothers through pelvic floor therapy. As a result of her practice and research, she hopes to profile the importance of this important area of practice for occupational therapists.

Occupational Therapy Professor Researches Pelvic Floor Therapies²

²<https://www.sacredheart.edu/news-room/news-listing/occupational-therapy-professor-researches-pelvic-floor-therapies/>



10 - Sharon M McCloskey, EDD, MBA, OT/L, DipCOT, CTP

AOTA AESIS Podcast

Dr. Sharon McCloskey is the AOTA Academic Education Special Interest Section (AESIS) co-innovation lead for *Innovation in Education*. The AESIS committee is composed of passionate occupational therapy educators with a diverse range of experience and backgrounds. Drs. Sharon McCloskey and Whitney Henderson (University of Missouri) have designed a monthly podcast series to support OT educators. The podcasts are posted monthly and available on AOTA CommunOT, the forum for all practice areas and discussion topics.

On October 26, 2022 Drs. McCloskey and Henderson hosted the first inaugural podcast with two excellent guest speakers, Dr Stacey Small of University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) and Dr. Lola Halperin of Sacred Heart University (SHU). The first podcast topic was "Mental Health and Well-Being of Occupational Therapy Graduate Students."

McCloskey, S & Henderson, W. (Hosts). (2022, October 26). Mental Health and Well-Being of Occupational Therapy Graduate Students (No.1). [Audio podcast episode]. In *AESIS Podcast Series*, CommunOT, AOTA.

<https://communot.aota.org/viewdocument/aesis-monthly-podcast?CommunityKey=0ed191ce-87b0-41e3-b824-6c3baec8539b&tab=librarydocuments>

This podcast is available through AOTA CommunOT under AESIS (members only).

Just Published - AOTA Continuing Education E-Learning Module

Dr. Sharon McCloskey recently published an AOTA E-Learning Module in collaboration with Megan Suman, OTR/L. This module is one of an AOTA e-Learning series/bundle, titled "Social Emotional Learning & Well-being for School Personnel."

McCloskey, S. & Suman, M. (2022). Occupational therapy's role in trauma-informed schools. *American Occupational Therapy (AOTA) Webinar Series*. https://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/product/OL8376



11 - Joan Sauvigne-Kirsch Ed.D., OTR/L

WFOT Congress 2022

On August 28, 2022, Dr. Sauvigne-Kirsch presented a paper at the 18th World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) Congress in Paris, France. The WFOT Congress only happens once every four years. The 2022 event welcomed over 2500 delegates from over 100 countries, with speakers from over 60 countries and sponsors from around the world. The WFOT Congress is a pinnacle event for OT scholars and practitioners, a global convergence of the profession, highlighting the latest research and practice topics. Congratulations to Dr. Sauvigne-Kirsch.

Sauvigne-Kirsch, J. (2022, 28 - 31 August). *Overcoming barriers and creating leadership pathways in school-based practice, lessons learned* [Paper presentation]. WFOT Congress 2022. Paris, France.

Driving Simulator Success

The profession of occupational therapy continues to demonstrate its remarkable growth through various success stories, such as that of Mr. Anthony Angione. Anthony is a 40-year-old man who suffered a spinal cord and brain injury during a motorcycle accident in 2008. He has been engaged in rehabilitation with physical therapists and occupational therapists for the past 14 years, with one of his goals being able to return to driving. The past two years, specifically, Anthony was able to utilize the driving simulator at the Center for Healthcare Education (CHE) at Sacred Heart in the hopes to regain this independence. Advanced technology along with the dedicated work of occupational therapy faculty and students has ultimately resulted in Anthony's return to the road using assistive hand controls.

Occupational therapy practitioners are experts at working with individuals on what is most important to them such as addressing the essential and everyday activities of daily living. By including driving, OT practitioners support clients in their goals of participation and engagement getting around their community. The DriveSafety RS 600 driving simulator at the CHE provides the unique opportunity for clients wishing to return to driving to be placed in driving scenarios in the safety of simulation. This tool is very beneficial to enabling independence of clients and transitioning people back on to the road. Anthony's story is one such person whom we are supporting to return to driving.

Dr. Sheelagh Schlegel is currently conducting a study on the effect of a driving simulator for adults with neurological conditions who want to regain some independence. Check out the latest news from Sacred Heart University about Dr. Schlegel's work and research.

<https://www.sacredheart.edu/news-room/news-listing/driving-simulator-helps-patients-become-road-ready/>





Simulation Education



The OT Program at Sacred Heart University utilizes simulation as a pedagogical approach to hone students clinical reasoning and practice skills. Simulations place students in situations where they can put their classroom knowledge into practice. Across the OT curriculum, students are progressed from low fidelity tasks and simulation experiences early in the program to more advanced high fidelity experiences in immersive contexts with use of standardized patients. Students experience tele-simulations, role-plays, social simulations, and many opportunities with patient actors. In all simulations formal debriefs are an important aspect of the learning.

In December, 2022, the PY2 students participated in a special Fieldwork Prep Day created and organized by Dr. Sheelagh Schlegel. The simulation experiences took place in the new simulation suite at the CHE building, followed by debriefs in a separate setting. All members of the OT faculty and staff participated in the delivery of all simulation experiences. It was a very successful event for all.



OT CLUB NEWS - SOTA and COTAD

Student Occupational Therapy Association

SOTA Board Members:

- President - Gianna Polletta
- Vice President - Claire Radak
- Secretary - Madeline Londo
- AOTA Representative - Cait Pursell
- ConnOTA Representative - Alexa Rodrigues
- Treasurer - Emily Pingelski

- Historian - Sara Herron

Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity

COTAD Board Members:

- Co-Chair I - Jessie Wells
- Co-Chair II - Meghan Isley
- Events Coordinator - Gabriella Sarracino
- Secretary - Aurpa Rashid
- Treasurer - Emily Fiorenti



12 - Madeline Londo, Claire Radak, Gianna Polletta, Sara Herron, Cait Pursell, Emily Pingelski, Alexa Rodrigues



13 - New board members of SOTA and COTAD



14 - Aurpa Rashid, Emily Fiorenti, Jessie Wells, Meghan Isley, Gabriella Sarracino

Student Club Events, Fall 2022



15 - Group photo of SHU COTAD Chapter at Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk

SOTA:

Silverman's Farm cohort bonding event (Oct. 2)

ConnOTA representative presented to the PY1s (Oct. 18)

Mentor and mentee round robin held with PY1s & PY2s (Oct. 25)

Careers in Occupational Therapy Zoom held for the PY1s (Nov. 15)

Behavioral Optometry guest speaker, Dr. Randy Schulman, presented to the PY2s (Nov. 9)

Zumba fundraiser (Nov. 16)

COTAD:

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk (Oct. 16)- Our chapter raised **\$619.53**

GLOBAL SERVICE-LEARNING



Capstone with Romanian Partners

Occupational Therapy faculty Drs. Ellen Martino and Heather Miller-Kuhaneck, and six PY2 OT students, collaborated with our Romanian partners for the third consecutive year. The occupational therapy program of Oxford-Brookes University in the UK also joined in this collaboration. The project took place during the SHU OT Department Service-Learning Week in mid-October, 2022. The OT faculty and students had visited Romania three years ago in person, and have connected virtually for the past two years as travel was restricted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and this year because of the Russian/Ukrainian war.

Dr. Martino and Dr. Miller-Kuhaneck provided consultations to the Romanian occupational therapists at the Maria Beatrice Center, a state-of-the-art pediatric outpatient facility providing services for children with neurological disorders. They also offered consultation services to a family-run school for children with autism. Consultations included suggestions for sensorimotor activities, positioning, facilitation

techniques, and modifications to increase children's participation in play, learning, and daily living activities.

Romanian occupational therapists have limited access to standardized assessment tools. As a capstone project, the SHU OT students (Hannah Tadic, Hannah Bolduc, Rawan Aldainy, Ashley Perugini, Ada Fusco, and Victoria Sauser) designed and delivered a workshop to educate Romanian occupational therapists and students, as well as occupational therapy students from the UK, on using observational techniques and activity analysis to administer informal assessments in children's natural settings. The SHU OT students incorporated video models and demonstrated use of activity analysis to identify developmental milestones as well as qualitative assessment observations. The students emphasized the importance and effectiveness of observing children engaged in typical play-based, educational, and daily living tasks to determine strengths and areas of challenge.

During the Service Learning Week the SHU OT students enjoyed meeting several Romanian children, occupational therapists, and school staff, as well as experiencing a virtual tour of the Maria Beatrice Center and the site of a second pediatric rehabilitation facility currently under construction.

"We look forward to continuing our partnership with hopes of returning to Romania in person when safe travel is possible again", stated Dr. Ellen Martino.

Guatemala Capstone Trip

In October, a group of PY2 OT students participated in an inter-professional, global service-learning trip to Guatemala for their Capstone projects. The purpose of the OT Capstone experience was to develop a culturally-sensitive photo-based education program to ensure sustainability of interventions in the Greater Panchoy Valley area. The OT students worked with young mothers and babies at a nearby orphanage, helped educate parents using culturally-appropriate photo-based communication, and built wheelchairs at Beeline Wheelchair Clinic. The students partnered with PT and SLP faculty and students. They all engaged in service throughout the week, giving back to a community in need, under the supervision of Professor Sheelagh Schlegel. The students also had the opportunity to explore the area and appreciate Guatemala's beautiful sites.









ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS



16 - Kaitlyn Cavanaugh, MS, OTR/L, CLC

Kaitlyn Cavanaugh earned her MSOT from Sacred Heart University. Her specialty is within the complex field of pediatric feeding and swallowing assessment and treatment. She has practiced in a variety of settings including hospital system, outpatient clinic, and homebased services. She is currently the owner of The Art of Eating, LLC, which looks at the whole child in order to support skill development and independence within mealtime participation, developmental, sensory based feeding challenges and tube transitions.

The Art of Eating³



17 - Kimberly DeLaura, MS, OTR/L

Kimberly DeLaura earned her bachelor's in psychology and MSOT from Sacred Heart University. She is NBCOT certified and also a member of AOTA. She is a pediatric occupational therapist with experience working in sensory clinics, the public school setting, and hospitals. She brings a unique lens to her work having experience in the school setting, home environment, medical setting and outpatient clinics. She opened EXPLORE Pediatric Therapy to create a place of change for the pediatric population and for families.

EXPLORE Pediatric Therapy⁴

³<https://www.theartofeatingllc.com/about>

⁴<https://www.explorepediatrictherapy.net/>

Connect With Us



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