



College of Health Professions

Master of Science in Occupational Therapy

The University's **graduate program in Occupational Therapy** is for candidates with an earned baccalaureate degree in a field other than Occupational Therapy. The program prepares students for entry-level practice and to serve as dynamic leaders, responsive to the needs of their human and professional communities. Graduates will be able to draw from diverse perspectives to collaboratively solve problems and engage in occupation-based practice and research guided by the principles of occupational justice, service, and the core values and ethics of the profession. Completion of the program requires two calendar years including summers. The program consists of four academic semesters plus 24 weeks of full-time, supervised clinical fieldwork with classes scheduled primarily during the day and early evenings. Level I fieldwork **experiences are integrated** into the class schedule throughout the curriculum. Hours for the two 12-week, full-time Level II fieldwork experiences are determined by the clinical site.

Our Problem-Based Learning Curricula allows you to think like a therapist from the moment you enter class.

WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY?

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) defines occupational therapy as **“a science-driven, evidence-based profession that enables people of all ages to live life to its fullest by helping them promote health and prevent—or live better with—illness, injury or disability.”** Occupation is the term used to capture the breadth of everyday life activities that allow people to live their lives to the fullest. Taking care of one's self and others, contributing to our families and communities, work, school, play, leisure, and pursuit of personal spirituality and meaning are occupations that contribute to our health and well-being that provides purpose to human life. Occupational Therapists' expertise lies in applying an understanding and knowledge of human development, functioning and performance, and the effects of disease and disability in working with people to enable them to more fully participate in their lives in ways that are meaningful. Central to the occupational therapy philosophy is the belief that the search for spirituality, knowledge, truth, purpose and meaning is fundamental to human expression; that occupations are central to a person's life; and that engagement in meaningful activities and occupations influences a person's health, well-being and life satisfaction. Occupational therapy enables people to participate and engage fully in meaningful activities and in their lives.

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SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

Sacred Heart University

- SHU is the second-largest Catholic university in New England with over 6,000 in attendance.
- The *Princeton Review* includes SHU among the Best 376 Colleges, while *U.S. News & World Report's America's Best Colleges* ranks SHU in the top tier of Master's Universities in the North in its annual college rankings.
- Sacred Heart University is set on 71 acres in suburban Fairfield, Connecticut, ranked in the top places to live in the Northeast and #9 in the country in *Money* magazine's 2006 list of "Best Places to Live." Fairfield is 90 minutes from Manhattan and 150 minutes from Boston.

Master of Science in Occupational Therapy

WHAT DO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS DO?

Occupational Therapists work with people of all ages with a wide variety of health conditions to develop or regain the skills they need to live full, satisfying, independent and productive lives. Occupational Therapists work in varied settings such as:

- Mental health facilities, assisting clients with daily activities and emotional well being to support participation in life roles.
- Acute care hospitals, working bedside with clients on self-care activities such as dressing and eating.
- Neonatal Intensive Care Units, helping premature newborns learn the oral motor skills needed for eating and developing calming environments that support growth.
- Public schools, assisting children with handwriting, attention, computer technology, cognitive skills and sensory motor skills necessary for academic performance.
- Rehabilitation centers and hospitals, working with survivors of serious trauma and introducing special technology and adapted equipment to allow the person to use a computer, drive and participate in sports, work, leisure and social activities.
- Industrial and office environments, designing alternative ways to perform work tasks to prevent repetitive strain injury.
- Health and wellness centers, working with people to create a balance of activities that support health.
- Hospitals, outpatient clinics, community mental health centers, skilled nursing facilities and home health care, restoring independent function.
- Private practice, managed care, insurance companies, community recreation centers, adult day care and homeless shelters, creating wellness and health promotion programs.
- Skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, home health care and well elderly programs, working on fall prevention, driving and home modification.
- Supervising occupational therapy assistants in their hands on care and case management.

FIELDWORK AND COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICE

The curriculum integrates fieldwork and community-based practice opportunities throughout the program. Fieldwork and community-based experiences provide students with practice opportunities to expand their skills in applying clinical reasoning, research evidence, leadership, supervisory and entrepreneurial skills in developing assessment and intervention strategies with their clients.

There are two types of clinical fieldwork experiences through the Program:

Level I fieldwork is integrated with specific courses throughout the curriculum and is scheduled each semester beginning in the second semester. Sites are located within a one-hour drive from the University.

Level II fieldwork consists of two, full-time, 12-week experiences. Fieldwork site placements represent all age groups and a wide range of practice areas, including hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, rehabilitation centers, public schools, community mental health centers and industry. Students may also complete their second Level II fieldwork in an international setting as arranged with the coordinator. Students should be advised that a felony conviction may affect a graduate's ability to sit for the NBCOT certification examination and/or attain state licensure. All Level II fieldwork must be completed within 24 months of coursework completion.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, the increasing elderly population will drive **growth in the demand** for occupational therapy services as the number of persons with functional limitations increases. It is projected that "employment of occupational therapists is expected **to increase by 26%** between 2008 and 2018, **much faster than the average** for all occupations." The mean annual salary is \$70,680. Job opportunities are projected to be good for licensed occupational therapists in all settings, particularly in schools, acute care hospitals, rehabilitation and orthopedic settings.

Additionally, occupational therapists with specialized knowledge in driver rehabilitation, training for the elderly and ergonomic consulting will have increased job prospects in these emerging practice areas.

Unique Attributes



With the growing need for occupational therapists nationwide and increasing public interest, our program has expanded to meet the demands of the profession. Our faculty is committed to each student and believes that learning naturally emerges from interactions between students, faculty, and clients. With this belief in mind, our program is structured to encourage and nurture these interactions. Our commitment to excellence is expressed in our departmental vision: **P.R.I.D.E.**

PRINCIPLED: Our values harmonize with those of the University and the profession of occupational therapy. Day-to-day operations and long term planning is in accordance with our mission, vision, professional ethics and core values. Occupational justice is practiced by providing service to the local community. We are committed to developing leaders who serve.

RESPONSIVE: We are readily available, and we personally attend to the needs of our students. We are flexible, adaptable to changing needs and advances, and adjust to changes in health care practice. We provide continuing education to the occupational therapy community, adjunct faculty, PBL facilitators, and fieldwork educators according to their needs.

INNOVATIVE: We utilize participatory pedagogies to encourage embodiment of professional skills. We engage in collaborative and multidisciplinary teaching. We implement novel and instructive technologies in our teaching methods and examine their usefulness and effectiveness by gathering and incorporating student feedback. We continually seek, examine, and utilize innovations in educational practice, clinical practice, research, and technology.

DYNAMIC: We are collaborative and team-oriented in pedagogy and clinical practice. We encourage exploration of multiple, diverse viewpoints to enlarge perspectives and solve problems. We are dedicated to seeking diversity in faculty, staff, and student populations- a powerful force for positive growth in our learning community.

EXCELLENT: We are committed to curricular excellence, quality teaching, and engagement in scholarship to support faculty and student knowledge. We engage in continual curricular improvements that promote life-long learning in students and faculty. We remain current in educational practice, clinical advancements, research, and technology. We encourage logical, critical, and informed questioning of existing theories, models, frames of reference, and domains of knowledge.

We are proud that the NBCOT pass rate for our graduates is above the national average, and are well respected among the professional community.

The graduate program in Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University is unique in its curriculum design, teaching-learning methodology, its vision, and its responsiveness to societal and professional trends. Our department's mission, vision, philosophy, and curriculum design reflect the values of the University as a whole as well as the educational philosophy of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

CURRICULUM DESIGN AND APPROACH TO LEARNING

The curriculum utilizes a **Problem Based Learning (PBL) approach**. PBL incorporates small group tutorials led by expert faculty members or clinical practitioners, designed to bridge course content with practice by having students actively engage in the clinical reasoning process through case studies.

Students solve clinical problems through self-directed and peer group study, evidence-based research and discussion in order to integrate a theoretical and foundational knowledge base into the application of occupational therapy assessment and intervention strategies and skills.

Students actively engage in and develop the clinical reasoning skills requisite to team collaboration, leadership and evidenced-based practice.

FACULTY

Our faculty have **more than 100** years of aggregate experience and are each specialists in their areas of Pediatrics, Geriatrics, Hand Therapy, Autism, Sensory Integration, and Problem-Based Learning to name a few. All are **advanced, licensed** Occupational Therapists, who also have their terminal degrees in Occupational Therapy, Education, Business, Public Health, or Marriage & Family Therapy. All are **published**, involved in the profession locally and nationally, and are dedicated and committed to the profession of occupational therapy. To read more about our faculty and their achievements and specialties please go to: http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/553_faculty_and_staff.cfm

Admission Requirements & Information



College Graduates and College Seniors:

The Early Decision deadline for completed applications and supplemental documents received is October 31.

The final deadline for completed applications and materials received is January 15.

If applying through OTCAS, please allow 2 months for our office to receive your verified application.

Early Decision Applicants:

Early Decision applicants must have completed the following prerequisites with final grades entered with their College or University's Registrar to receive an early decision interview: Biology with lab; Human Anatomy & Physiology I with lab; Statistics; Psychology and one additional prerequisite course.

Requirements for admission include:

- Successful completion of all prerequisite courses with a GPA of 3.2 or better with no prerequisite course below a grade of C
- Overall GPA of 3.0 or better
- Science Prerequisite GPA (Bio, A & P I and A & P II) of 3.0 or better
- Submission of a completed Graduate OT Application:
- **Internal** SHU Students do the application online at www.sacredheart.edu
- **External** students do the National OT application online at www.OTCAS.org
- Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended
- Essay
- Relevant volunteer experience in the OT field
- Completion of a baccalaureate degree
- Successful interview with the Occupational Therapy Admissions Committee upon invitation

Entering College Freshmen:

Entering freshmen that meet the Freshman Decision Option criteria outlined by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions will have a seat reserved in the Graduate Occupational Therapy program contingent upon successful completion of all prerequisites and undergraduate major, maintenance of a 3.0 or better overall and 3.2 prerequisite GPA throughout SHU tenure and an interview with the Occupational Therapy Admissions Committee during their senior year of college.

Honor Society:

Pi Theta Epsilon is the national Occupational Therapy honor society whose mission is to support the development of occupational sciences and the practice of authentic occupational therapy by promoting research, service and other scholarly activities by its members.

Who Can I Contact If I Have More Questions?

Kathy Dilks, M.S.
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 E-mail: dilksk@sacredheart.edu
www.sacredheart.edu/graduate.cfm

Office of Financial Assistance
 Tel. (203) 371-7980
http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/771_graduate-students.cfm

PREREQUISITE COURSE REQUIREMENTS:	
Biology I with lab	4 Cr
*Human Anatomy & Physiology I with lab	4 Cr
*Human Anatomy & Physiology II with lab	4 Cr
A Psychology Course	3 Cr
Abnormal Psychology	3 Cr
Life Span Development	3-9 Cr
<i>(Must include the study of the entire lifespan, from birth, adolescent and old age)</i>	
Sociology / Anthropology or Social Psychology	3 Cr
*Statistics, Psychological Statistics or Biostatistics	3 Cr
<i>(Must include descriptive statistics probability, confidence intervals, correlation and hypothesis testing)</i>	

RECOMMENDED ELECTIVES
That would benefit you once in the graduate program:
Exercise Science
Kinesiology
Physics with lab
Neuroscience
*Must have been taken within the past 10 years

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

The Occupational Therapy Program is accredited under the "Standards for an Accredited Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist-2006" by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). For information about accreditation, contact ACOTE c/o AOTA, 4720 Montgomery Lane, P.O. Box 31220, Bethesda, MD 20824-1220; (301) 652-2682; www.aota.org.

Graduates of the Program are eligible to sit for the national certification examination for the Occupational Therapist administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). After successful completion of this exam, the individual will be an Occupational Therapist, Registered (OTR™). Most states, including Connecticut, require licensure in order to practice; however, state licenses are usually based on the results of the NBCOT Certification Examination. Students should note that a felony conviction might affect a graduate's ability to sit for the NBCOT exam or attain state licensure.

