



Master of Science in Occupational Therapy



The University's **Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy** is for candidates with a baccalaureate degree in a field other than Occupational Therapy. The program **prepares you for entry-level practice** and to serve as dynamic leaders, responsive to the needs of their human and professional communities. You 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 with classes scheduled primarily during the day plus 24 weeks of full-time, supervised clinical fieldwork called Level II fieldwork. Hours for the Level II fieldwork experiences are determined by the clinical site. Level I fieldwork experiences are integrated into the class schedule through the academic year. A limited number of part-time seats are available for students not able to attend the graduate program on a full-time basis with courses scheduled during the day with the full time cohort.

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 including self-care, taking care of others, contributing to our families, and to the social and economic life of the communities in which we live, play, work, and go to school. Occupations enhance our health and well-being and lend purpose and meaning to human life. Occupational Therapists' **expertise** lies in applying **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. The core philosophy of occupational therapy is the belief that occupations are central to a person's life and engagement in meaningful occupations influences a person's health, well-being, and life satisfaction. Occupational Therapy enables people to participate and engage fully in meaningful activities in their lives.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, **employment of Occupational Therapists is expected to increase faster than the average** through 2014. The mean yearly salary is \$67,920. OT is considered a recession proof career and the demand for Occupational Therapists will continue to rise as a result of growth in the number of persons requiring therapy services. As greater numbers of persons live beyond 75 years of age with some limitations, persons critically affected by trauma or illness survive with permanent disability, and babies born prematurely are affected by developmental delays, more occupational therapists will be needed. The demand for Occupational Therapists in public schools, acute care settings, home health care and rural settings are on the rise. Additionally, the number of Occupational Therapists in entrepreneurial and supervisory roles is increasing.

SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

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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 may be found:

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

Occupational therapists also supervise occupational therapy assistants and educate caregivers and families in their hands-on care and case management.



WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY'S OT PROGRAM?

The Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University is highly unique in its **curriculum design**, its **teaching-learning methodology**, and its **vision and responsiveness** to societal and professional trends and direction.

Sacred Heart University was **the first** graduate-level Occupational Therapy education program in Connecticut and the first program in the state to meet ACOTE's mandate that the entry level for all Occupational Therapy education programs move to the post baccalaureate degree.

CURRICULUM DESIGN & 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. In PBL students actively engage in the clinical reasoning process through case studies. You will solve clinical problems through self-directed and peer group study, evidence-based research, and discussion to integrate a theoretical and foundational knowledge base into the application of occupational therapy assessment and intervention strategies and skills that is based on the best available research. You will actively engage in and develop the critical reflection and clinical reasoning skills requisite to team collaboration, leadership and evidenced-based practice. PBL provides you with the foundation for self-directed, life-long learning necessary for professional practice. The curriculum is organized utilizing a systems and developmental approach and strongly reflects a philosophy of humanism, service to others, and community-based practice. You are provided with a strong educational background to address the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of your clients in order to design occupation-based interventions which enable clients to participate optimally in their own living environments of work, school, play, home, society, and community.

FIELDWORK AND COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICE

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



FOCUS ON RESEARCH & EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Evidence-based practice requires an understanding of research evidence and an ability to critique the available literature guiding occupational therapy practice. The program emphasizes research throughout the curriculum and allows students to develop their research skills in a progressive sequence under the guidance of experienced faculty and clinicians. This curriculum sequence culminates with the completion of a Capstone Research project and a poster presentation of the results of their research to peers and faculty.

RESPONSIVENESS TO SOCIETAL TRENDS

The Occupational Therapy Program strongly reflects consumer demands for integrated, coordinated and humane treatment. A person's physical, social, cultural, psychological, cognitive, and spiritual systems are studied as an integrated whole; not as separate entities or apart from the person's life contexts.

RESPONSIVENESS TO THE REALITIES OF THE MARKETPLACE AND HEALTH CARE POLICY

The program actively prepares you to develop proactive and entrepreneurial skills in marketing occupational therapy services and program development in new practice areas. Faculty-student-clinician collaborations are structured into the program to facilitate this unique undertaking.

CLASS SIZE & STRUCTURE

The class size is approximately 25-30 students. Typical student to faculty ratio in laboratories is 15 to 1 and PBL tutorial groups typically consist of 5-7 students with a faculty facilitator. The faculty are highly involved with the students, know them well, and view students with respect as future colleagues. Faculty strive to facilitate the professional, personal, and spiritual development of all students.

FACULTY

Our faculty have over 100 years of aggregate experience and are specialists in practice in the Pediatric, Adult, and Geriatric populations, with specialty areas including Hand Therapy, Autism intervention and Ayres' Sensory Integration Intervention to name a few. All are licensed, published, and advanced Occupational Therapists, with their terminal degrees in Education, Business, Public Health, and Marriage & Family Therapy. Four of our faculty members served as executive Board Members of the Connecticut Occupational Therapy Association and all are active members in AOTA.

To read more about our faculty and their achievements and specialties please go to:

http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/553_faculty_and_staff.cfm

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. The occupational therapy department at Sacred Heart University now is home to the Gamma Nu chapter of Pi Theta Epsilon, inaugurating its first members in the spring of 2009.

CLINICAL SITES

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 first semester. The Academic Fieldwork Education Coordinator (AFEC), in collaboration with faculty, arranges for all Level I fieldwork sites. Level I fieldwork sites are located within one hour drive from the University. Level II fieldwork experiences consist of two, full-time, 12-week experiences. The AFEC, in collaboration with the student, arranges for the type and location of Level II fieldwork placements. 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. Our full-time AFEC continues to establish contracts for clinical fieldwork education sites for Sacred Heart Students may also complete their second Level II fieldwork in an international setting as arranged with the AFEC. Most Level II fieldwork sites require criminal background checks and proof of immunizations. All Level II fieldwork must be completed within 24 months of coursework completion.



ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

College Graduates and College Seniors:

Completed application deadline is January 15 for the following Fall term.

Sacred Heart University Juniors can apply early if most prerequisites have been completed by December 15th.

Requirements for admission include:

- Successful completion of all prerequisite courses with a GPA of 3.0 or better
- Overall GPA of 3.0 or better
- Submission of a completed graduate admission application and applicable fee
- Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended
- Two letters of recommendation (one from an academic source, one from an employer or volunteer supervisor)
- Essay
- Relevant volunteer experience in the OT field
- Completion of a baccalaureate degree
- Resume
- Interview with the Occupational Therapy Admissions Committee, which will include participation in a group problem-based learning experience and individual interview

College Freshman:

Early Program Decision Option requirements for entering freshman include three of the four requirements:

- **High school GPA of 3.2 or higher in academic courses (Math, Science, History, English and Language);**
- **SAT scores of 1100 or higher;**
- **Rank in the top 30% of their high school class;**
- **Successful completion of 4 years of Science.**

Entering freshman that meet Early Program Decision Option criteria will have a seat reserved in the graduate Occupational Therapy program contingent upon successful completion of all prerequisites and an undergraduate major, maintenance of a 3.0 or better GPA throughout SHU tenure, and **an interview with the Occupational Therapy Admissions Committee at the end of their junior or senior year.** Acceptance decisions are made by the Undergraduate Admissions Office and the Department of Occupational Therapy upon review of the Undergraduate Admissions Application

PREREQUISITE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Biology I with lab	4 credits
*Human Anatomy & Physiology I & II with lab	8 credits
Psychology	3 credits
Abnormal Psychology	3 credits
Life Span Development or Developmental Psychology	3-9 credits
<i>(Must include the study of the entire life-span, from birth to old age)</i>	
Sociology	3 credits
*Statistics	3 credits
<i>(Must include descriptive statistics probability, confidence intervals, correlation and hypothesis testing)</i>	
Interpersonal Communication or Group Dynamics or Family Dynamics	3 credits
**Diversity or Multicultural Studies	3 credits
**Ethics, or Bioethics or Medical Ethics	3 credits

RECOMMENDED ELECTIVES

Physics with lab	4 credits
Neuroscience	4 credits

*Must have been taken within the past 10 years

**May be taken concurrently with the program but must be completed before beginning the second level II Fieldwork experience.

NOTE: Alternative courses and CLEP tests may meet some prerequisite criteria. Applicants must submit CLEP test results and University catalogue course descriptions, or, other relevant documentation to the director of Sacred Heart University's Occupational Therapy Program to determine if the alternative course/CLEP meets prerequisite requirements.

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 may affect a graduate's ability to sit for the NBCOT exam or attain state licensure.

MORE QUESTIONS?

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