

University of Central Arkansas Department of Occupational Therapy

2023 Cohort
Doctoral Capstone Abstracts

Victoria Barnhill

Doctoral Capstone: Advanced Community Practice: The Role of Occupational Therapy with Vets on Therapeutic Gardening

Faculty Mentor: Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This capstone project focused on the therapeutic benefits of gardening with veterans. The project aimed to explore the impact of therapeutic gardening intervention on the physical, psychological, and social well-being of veterans. The aim of the project was to increase social participation, improve quality of life, and foster a sense of purpose among participants. Based on the post-participation questionnaire, veterans reported that they were satisfied with the program and their participation in it gave them a sense of belonging among other veterans.



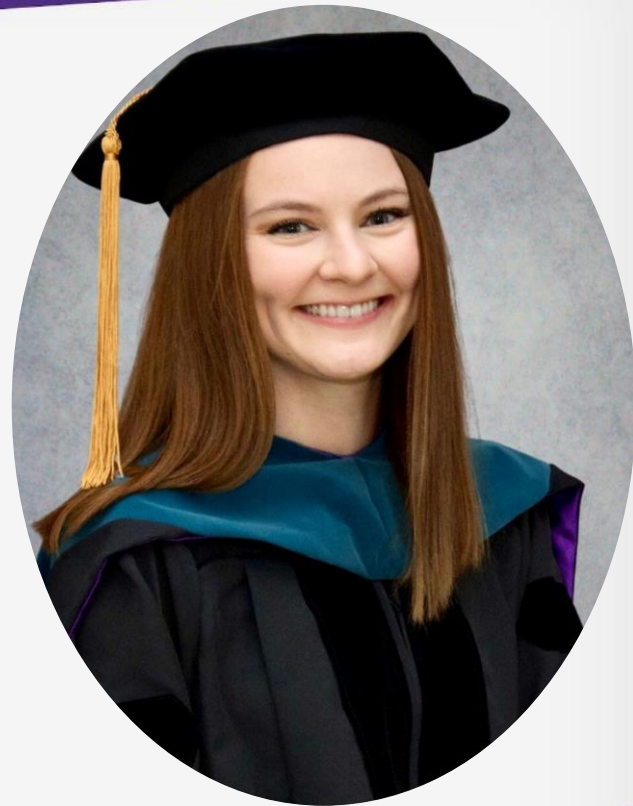
Sydney Bergt

Doctoral Capstone: Increasing Occupational Performance in Foster Children: A Life Skills and Transition Lab Design

Faculty Mentor: Deborah Gangluff, Sc.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

This capstone project serves as an avenue for advocacy and education to address the social injustices of foster children, so that they can increase their overall occupational performance within their daily lives. Within this capstone project, a resource notebook was created with activity ideas including activity analyses, as well as, educational handouts for the therapists and foster children to reference now and at a later time. This capstone project served as a start up for the life skills and transition lab at the therapy clinic in Morrilton, AR. Short term and long-term design plans were recommended and given to Southern Christian Children's Home and Therapy Monkey for future decisions with developing the physical space for the life skills and transition lab. Within the resource notebook, there was a focus on addressing primarily IADLs such as: grocery, cooking and baking, money management, home management and laundry care, and social skills and communication. Transition services addressed were career exploration, career preparation, job searching, and obtaining employment. Changes made within the physical space of the life skills and transition lab included washing the concrete floors and stairs, sanding and painting the stairs, and removing extra furniture. Next steps for the physical space were recommended and given to Southern Christian Children's Home and Therapy Monkey.



Johanna Bevis

Doctoral Capstone: Fostering Occupational Engagement in Youth

Faculty Mentor: Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This capstone experience aimed to facilitate occupational engagement by implementing a sports program through learning what is required of children with disabilities when engaging in sports and then making any modifications to promote that engagement. A child's development can be altered when there is a lack of occupations. One occupation many children with disabilities do not get to participate in is sports. To increase opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in sports, the OTS partnered with the Lonoke Community Center to offer a 5-week sports program. For children with disabilities, participation in sports-related activities can be difficult due to the inconsistency of the occupational demands of the sports aligning with the child's performance skills. To ensure that the equipment and environment in which it was played fit the needs of every child, program development required observation of the participants' performance skills, researching various sports, and completing activity analysis. While sports can provide various health benefits to those who participate individually, participating with peers can offer more. Therefore, the capstone student partnered with Lonoke Schools to gather program participants and student volunteers. Recruitment required both advocating and educating about the importance of inclusivity. This community sports program aimed to promote participants' independence, improve overall health, and provide a sense of purpose by providing an opportunity to participate in sports. The program addressed and accomplished this goal by gathering performance measures using a pre-and post-questionnaire from participants' parents/guardians and volunteers.



Allison Bonnette

Doctoral Capstone: Nourishing Students Clinical Reasoning Skills:
Selecting and Implementing Interventions for Adult Rehabilitation

Faculty Mentor: Lorrie George-Paschal, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP

Abstract:

The primary goal of this doctoral capstone project was to develop comprehensive resources that would effectively scaffold the student learning process for clinical reasoning skills within the occupational therapy domain. These resources were specifically designed to facilitate the selection and implementation of interventions in the adult setting, equipping future occupational therapists with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate complex clinical scenarios with confidence and competence. The intention was to bridge the gap between theory and practice, empowering students to seamlessly apply clinical reasoning principles throughout the entire occupational therapy process. A clinical reasoning student learning module was created for the UCA Formative Competency course. Central to this module was the incorporation of a meticulously crafted flowchart, deliberately designed to adhere to an analytic and systematic approach to breaking down clinical scenarios into manageable and digestible parts. In parallel, a practice guidebook was developed through collaboration with therapists in six different adult practice settings. The practice guide features activity analysis models of interventions, offering detailed breakdowns of each activity's relevance to occupations, addressed body structures, functions, and performance skills, objective measures for each intervention, and ways the intervention can be graded up and down. The practice guide's structure is thoughtfully intended to encourage students to approach the process of selecting interventions with a critical and discerning perspective, guided by the activity analysis model. The student learning module and practice guidebook both aimed to enhance understanding and foster students' success in adult rehabilitation.



Jessica Brandon

Doctoral Capstone: Hands-On Advocacy: Raising Awareness of OT/OTA Role and Readiness for Hand Therapy Experiences

Faculty Mentor: Mark Ellis, OTR/L, CHT

Abstract:

Hands-on Advocacy: Raising awareness of OT/OTA roles and readiness for hand therapy experiences focused on uniting and empowering students in occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs to enrich entry-level education by promoting understanding, confidence, and interest in the hand therapy setting. The needs assessment for my project highlighted a gap between awareness of this specialty area and a heightened interest if there was increased confidence among students. This gap was addressed by building a social media presence that allowed students to test their knowledge, engage in educational opportunities related to common conditions, and network with certified hand therapists and other students. Expanding on a previous student group, this project created an avenue for the formation of a student group utilizing the American Society of Hand Therapists' user guide on how to start a student hand therapy club. Through highlighting all information within this project journey, I also created and published "Hand in Hand: a pocket reference for hand therapy concepts" which is now available through Amazon. Engaging in clinical experiences throughout this project strengthened my clinical skills as a future practitioner. All in all, this doctoral capstone project helped grow my leadership and advocacy skills and appreciate the beauty of human anatomy as it relates to occupational performance.



Ashlee Burgess

Doctoral Capstone: Implementation of Yoga in the School System

Faculty Mentor: Tina A. Mankey, Ed.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

The capstone project “Implementation of Yoga in the School System” was a program developed to improve self-regulation and academic performance in the classroom. Additional learning opportunities were obtained through the collaboration of capstone experiences. The program was designed to introduce students to yoga and the benefits of yoga. Integrating yoga into the school system can help with many of the daily challenges presented within the classroom. These challenges can have negative impacts on students and can affect academic success. Yoga and mindfulness activities can help students develop mind-body awareness to improve their overall health and well-being. Pre-post questionnaires were utilized to collect raw data about the effectiveness of the program. The overarching purpose for the development of this program was for students to benefit from completing the program. Most questionnaire responses indicated that yoga is a useful tool that can have a lot of value within the classroom. It can be concluded that yoga implementation in the school system can have positive results on children while remaining simple to implement. However, future research is warranted due to a variety of limitations in order to generalize yoga to negative emotions and behaviors that are seen within the classroom.



Lauren Carmack

Doctoral Capstone: Haircuts for Children with Sensory Processing Difficulties

Faculty Mentor: Deborah Gangluff, Sc.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

There are challenges that children with sensory processing difficulties experience each time they get their haircut as it can be an overload of sensory input. There are many new sounds, sensations, feelings, and smells that come with getting a haircut and this can make a child feel uneasy or unsafe. This doctoral capstone project focused on improving the knowledge of cosmetologists, families, and occupational therapists on the difficulties children with sensory processing difficulties encounter while getting their haircuts. Collaborating with cosmetologists, families, and children to develop appropriate adaptations for a sensory-friendly haircut experience is an important role occupational therapists can play when it comes to this grooming task.



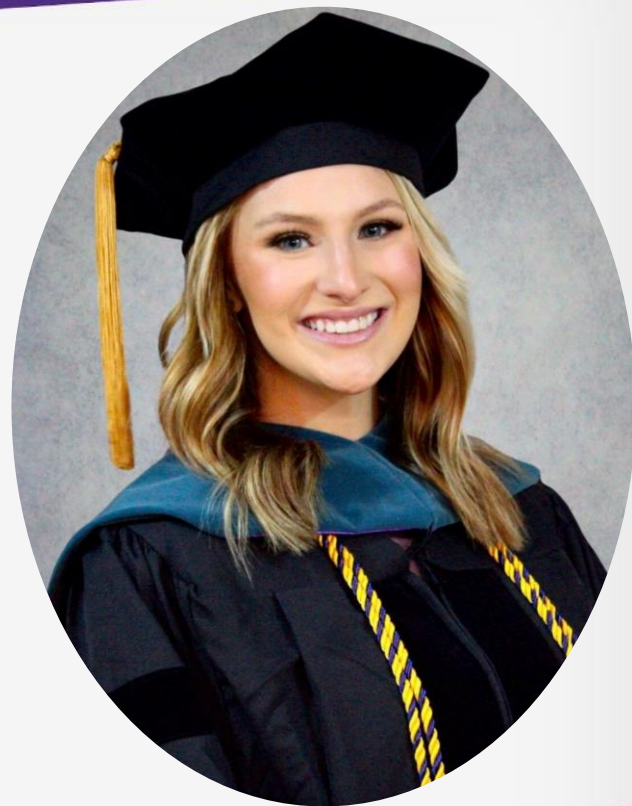
Amanda Cathey

Doctoral Capstone: Exploring the Impact of Language Barriers on Treatment within Occupational Therapy

Faculty Mentor: Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone project centered around research, advocacy, education, and professional development. The aim of this project was to bridge the gap that exists in occupational therapy practice created by language barriers. Throughout the doctoral capstone experience, the doctoral student advocated for individuals with LEP through the development and implementation of resources to be utilized in occupational therapy practice (a new communication method, resource notebook, translated therapy documents, and a Spanish pocket guide) and staff education/training. Additional learning opportunities were obtained through clinical experiences, continuing education courses, and an online Spanish course. Evaluation of this doctoral capstone experience was achieved through a pre-and post-program focus group with occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech-language pathologists, as well as pre-and post-program caregiver surveys.



Kaylee Clark

Doctoral Capstone: Universal Design and Aging in Place Concepts: Advanced Clinical Practice and Education Empowering OT's Role in Accessible Home Designs.

Faculty Mentor: Lorrie George-Paschal, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP

Abstract:

The purpose of this project was to explore, educate and advocate for occupational therapy's role within accessible home designs. Key areas addressed were advanced clinical practice, education, and advocacy in an emerging practice setting. The advanced clinical skills objective was obtained through the completion of the CAPS I course, 9+ Universal Design courses, and conducting multiple home assessments and consultations. This knowledge was then utilized to create an Extensive Accessible Home Design Manual with a virtual component to assist in closing the gap between interprofessional collaboration and evidence-based practice for OT's role in accessible home designs. This manual was tailored to OT's perspective and role and was presented to interior designers, Sherwin-William executives, occupational therapists, and local hospitals. The education and advocacy areas were achieved through engagement in attending an aging in place panel at High Point Market in North Carolina, networking with senior living interior designers, assisting in creating a Sherwin Williams Aging in Place Color Card, directing a social media business page, creating and participating in multiple podcast episodes, and presented capstone experience to various organizations, associations, and OT cohorts around the U.S. Project outcomes conclude that after reading the Extensive Accessible Home Design Manual, 89% participants stated they were 'very likely' to work with an occupational therapist in home design in the future. While 100% stated the manual helped them understand the roles and process of collaborating with an OT in home design.



Alysa Cole

Doctoral Capstone: Food is Fun: Pediatric Feeding Education to Encourage Participation in Family Meal Time

Faculty Mentor: Deborah Gangluff, Sc.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

This project aimed to address pediatric feeding parent education resources for occupational and speech therapists. Parent education is essential in helping children achieve optimal therapeutic outcomes by increasing the likelihood of adherence to home programs and therapeutic strategies at home, which helps maintain therapeutic gains. Mealtime participation and eating are important activities of daily living that affect a child's ability to participate and achieve optimal occupational performance. The doctoral capstone project involved advanced clinical practice and education on pediatric feeding difficulties. The clinical portion occurred at Reach Therapy Services and provided experience and insight into areas where additional educational resources were needed. The educational portion included the creation of parent education resources and advocacy/education to the general public. The final product included a resource folder with copies of the capstone resources and a list of resources available online. The folder contains QR codes to allow the resources to be shared in various forms, including physical or digital via email or text, as access to resources across various platforms can increase the likelihood of their inclusion into daily life. The resource folders were evaluated through a six-question survey completed by a current practicing feeding therapist at Reach who received a resource folder. The project has contributed to the advancement of occupational therapy due to its multidisciplinary approach to educational resources, which is best practice for feeding teams.



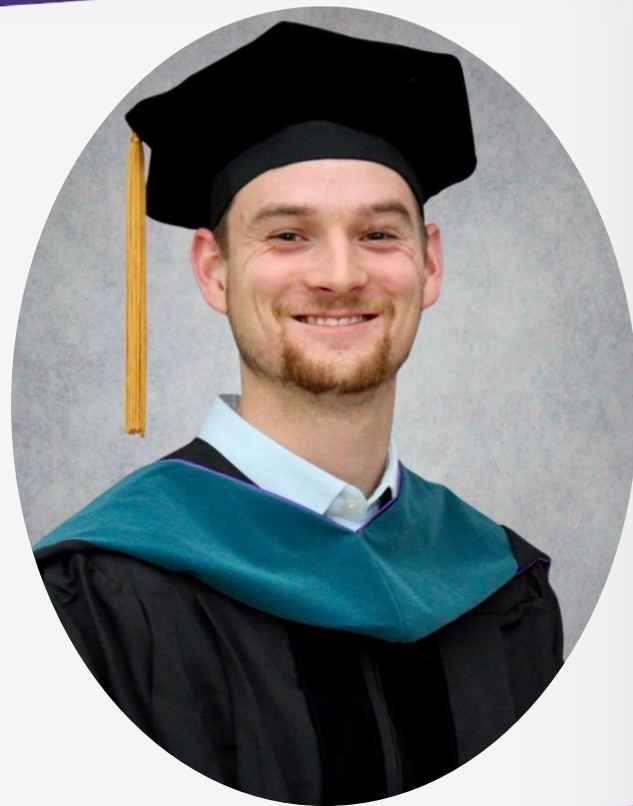
Colten Crews

Doctoral Capstone: A Seat at the Table: A Resource Guide for Church Accessibility

Faculty Mentor: Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

Spirituality is considered a component of well-being according to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA, 2020). It is important to ensure that people of all abilities can participate in their respective religions to increase their quality of life. This study asks what are the barriers and facilitators for religious inclusion for families with disabilities. Principal Investigator selected a qualitative case study design to recruit seven congregants and three faith leaders. Families report a lack of social support and understanding while faith leaders report a higher focus on eliminating physical barriers and confidence that their organization has a welcoming attitude. In addition to research, students wrote a comprehensive digital guide as a resource for churches to improve inclusion for people with disabilities. The guide is available for free on a website the student created.



Trenedy Curry

Doctoral Capstone: A Sense of Support: Educating Support Staff and Non-Certified Teachers on Sensory Processing Disorders

Faculty Mentor: Deborah Gangluff, Sc.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone project was focused on education and advocacy for children with sensory processing disorders. Conducted within the early intervention school setting, this project used in-services to educate the school's non-certified teachers and support staff on how sensory processing disorders present and how to better serve students who experience them. Information was obtained from The Collaborative for Leadership in Ayres Sensory Integration (CLASI). Relevant components were then compiled into an in-service presentation, using layman's terms, and presented to the school's staff. In-services included education on symptoms and triggers of sensory processing disorders, the effect of sensory integration on occupational participation, case-based examples, and sensory-friendly meal and classroom ideas. The in-service PowerPoint was converted into a guided format with voice recordings. The guided PowerPoint and handouts were then provided to the facilities for future onboarding training for staff.



Whitney Dobbbs

Doctoral Capstone: Inclusive Design in the Community: Access for all to every space

Faculty Mentor: Lorrie George-Paschal, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP

Abstract:

Community life enhances the quality of life, but there are many who are excluded due to the built environment. This capstone project focused on utilizing education and advocacy to improve inclusion in community settings for individuals with seen and unseen disabilities. I interned at the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) in Boston, MA to gain in-depth knowledge on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance guidelines, state accessibility codes, and social determinants of health, race, culture, and economic status in relation to the prevalence of disability. Additionally, I took part in accessibility reviews, User/Expert contextual inquiries, and consulting and design projects. After the internship, I returned to the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) campus and provided an accessibility review of Torreyson Library to promote inclusive design and provide recommendations to better equip the library to meet the needs of students, faculty, and the community at large.



Allie Ellis

Doctoral Capstone: The Occupational Therapy Evaluation and Intervention Process of Spinal Cord Injury Patients

Faculty Mentor: Lorrie George-Paschal, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP

Abstract:

The project was focused on research, education, and clinical practice to increase knowledge regarding evaluation and intervention methods utilized with patients with spinal cord injuries to better prepare level II fieldwork students for working with this population (SCIs). The research project involved surveying and interviewing occupational therapists from various settings. The survey gathered generalized data but found that the specific assistive technology, evaluation tools, and educational topics varied the most between levels of injury. The interview gathered more in-depth information regarding non-traditional, medically-approved interventions. The following four themes were established: engagement in occupation-based goals, improving occupational engagement, interventions paired with functional activities, and OT versus PT role in intervention. The education aspect involved creating a resource guide for SCI evaluation and interventions based upon observations during level II fieldwork and capstone clinical experience as well as an intensive literature review. The clinical practice involved observing SCI treatment in an acute care facility, a skilled nursing facility, and a seating and mobility company for wheelchair evaluation. Additionally, a 6-week clinical was completed at Vanderbilt Stallworth Rehabilitation Hospital to gain additional experience with more advanced intervention.



Lacey Erwin

Doctoral Capstone: OT & Arthritis: Arthritis Education in the Community Through Online Media and Partnership with University of Central Arkansas Outreach and Community Engagement

Faculty Mentor: Mark Ellis, OTR/L, CHT

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone experience focused on advocacy and education by providing educational videos, promotional content, and materials using online media to increase the awareness of Osteoarthritis (OA), Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), and Occupational Therapy (OT) to the surrounding community. This was possible through a partnership with the University of Central Arkansas's Outreach and Community Engagement department. During the OT & Arthritis series, I covered topics such as Introductions to OA, RA, and OT's role in arthritis care, the Impacts on Activities of Daily Living/Instrumental Activities of Daily Living, Physical Activity, Joint Protection, Adaptive Equipment, and Energy Conservation/Environmental Modifications. These topics were chosen after research on available education, resources, and the CDC reports about the topics. Additionally, I created educational handouts for Joint Protection and Energy Conservation/Environmental Modifications, a resource list based on addressing the topics mentioned in the educational series with local resources available to the community for low to no cost. For the advocacy portion, I completed an advocacy event to increase awareness of my capstone project to second-year students. Furthermore, throughout my capstone project, I educated the public, mycolleagues, and arthritis professionals to increase awareness of OA, RA, and OT's role in arthritis care about the educational topics.



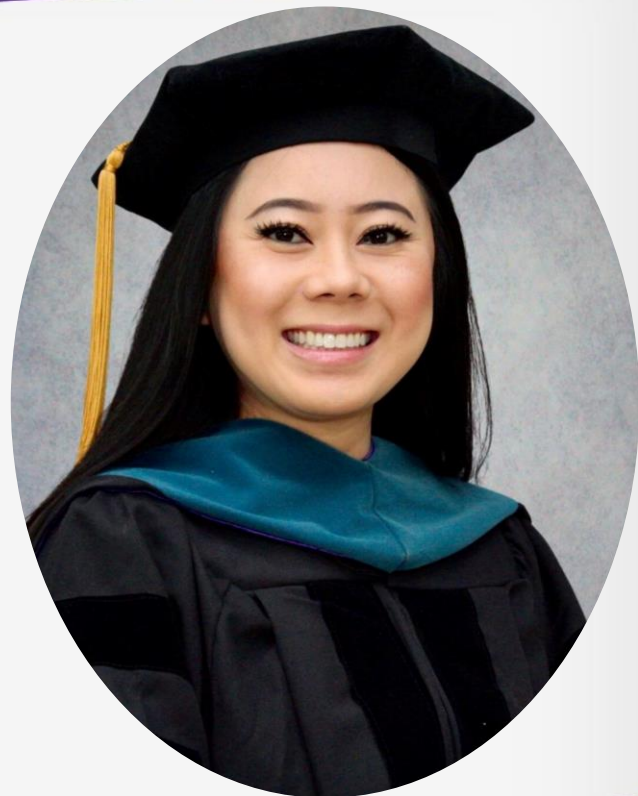
Danielle Espiritu

Doctoral Capstone: Different Pickles: An Adaptive Pickleball Program

Faculty Mentor: January Schultz, PhD

Abstract:

Different Pickles is an adaptive pickleball program that provided people of all abilities to participate in the sport of pickleball within the Central Arkansas area. The purpose and vision of the program were to allow improved engagement in occupations, quality of life, and health outcomes through adaptive means. The program created community partnerships with the Benton River Center, UCA HPER Center, and Don Owens Sports Center. A total of 8 participants met weekly to engage in games of pickleball, and adaptive techniques were applied based on health and physical needs. Pre and post-survey questions were administered to determine the impact of the program relating to quality of life, health outcomes, and social participation. Data analysis revealed overall improvement in quality of life, health status, social engagement, and leisure engagement. The results of the study suggest that community sports programs can have a positive effect on occupational engagement. Additional research is required as more programs develop and adaptive pickleball gains more recognition.



Sabrina Gonzales

Doctoral Capstone: Occupational Therapy's Role with Assistive Technology in the Home and Work Setting

Faculty Mentor: Lorrie George-Paschal, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone project was created to explore the avenues of advanced clinical practice and advocacy through education regarding assistive technology (AT) in the home and work setting. By observing different professionals in their settings and gaining knowledge of different categories of AT, two booklets were created, producing local and national resources for those who may recommend or use AT. As a result, other professionals and clients could have access to this resource in order to learn more about AT domains and common AT of interest that enhance occupations in the home and work environment. This project was presented to OT, OTA, and AT professionals as a way for generalists and entry-level OT practitioners to have a brief resource to look over instead of spending vast amounts of time trying to research AT online.



Laramie Hall

Doctoral Capstone: Freedom Fishing Project

Faculty Mentor: Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone focused on advocacy and innovation of a new form of assistive technology to encourage occupational engagement in the leisure activity of fishing. The new assistive technology was designed to provide an opportunity to participate in fishing for those who are either wheelchair-mobile or have decreased mobility. Because decreased mobility in some capacity is a common factor of aging, it is important that our profession consider the impacts decreased mobility can have on occupational performance and engagement. During this capstone, I was able to meet with production managers at Ranger Boats and Bass Cat Boats, and they provided me insight as to how boats can be modifiable for individuals. The overall goal of this doctoral capstone was to design and construct a wheelchair lift that could be installed in a boat, and to advocate to boat manufacturers about the importance of universal design in their products. I was able to construct a functioning wheelchair lift prototype, with one design flaw that hindered me from taking a participant on an excursion. I was also able to record an advocacy presentation that was sent to the boat manufacturers. I advocated for ways to improve the universal design by emphasizing high contrast features for individuals with visual deficits, and the idea to install handrails in appropriate places for individuals with gait instability. I learned throughout this experience the importance of being a voice for our clients and supporting their goals despite how outside of the box they may be.



Mary Hartman

Doctoral Capstone: Life After Brain Injury: A Resource Notebook for Survivors and Their Families

Faculty Mentor: Deborah Gangluff, Sc.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone project was to advocate for acquired brain injury survivors through insight gained from their perspectives on the process of returning home and reintegrating into their communities. The clinical portion of this project was completed at St. Vincent Rehabilitation Hospital in Sherwood, AR and the Veterans Affairs Hospital in North Little Rock, AR. These clinical experiences were provisional ones in the pursuit of a Certified Brain Injury Specialist designation. The capstone project also consisted of the development of a resource guide for survivors and their families as part of an education program.



Alliyah Higgins

Doctoral Capstone: The Effectiveness of Latin-Based Dance Interventions on Balance, Endurance, and Quality of Life within the Geriatric Population

Faculty Mentor: Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This capstone experience focused on research, program development, and the effects of Latin-inspired dance interventions within the geriatric community over the period of nine weeks (15 sessions). This project took place at a retirement center (three participants) and an assisted living facility (one participant). All participants were female, over the age of 65, and had intact cognitive functions. The main focus of this project was research, to observe the changes in balance, endurance, and quality of life within this population with this dance intervention. The secondary focus was program development and creating a project that can be continued by a future capstone student. The dances were geared towards standing individuals and wheelchair-bound individuals. They were choreographed to cater to all types of dance abilities, as well as intensity levels. Towards the end of this project, videos were created into DVD format referencing the dancing that transpired during the project so both facilities could continue this dance aerobics program, as well as maintain 150 minutes of physical activity per week as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022). The program evaluation findings from this project suggest that Latin-inspired dance interventions and consistent physical exercise have a positive effect on balance, endurance, and quality of life.



Bhavini Jhala

Doctoral Capstone: Sharing is Caring

Faculty Mentor: Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone experience centered around education, advocacy, and advanced community practice. Throughout the 14-week period, I traveled to Kidsource and Lakeside Primary School to increase my knowledge of OT interventions for various pediatric diagnoses. I combined my knowledge from the practitioners with what I learned from articles, literature reviews, blogs, etc. to create educational resources for caregivers. The first set of resources consisted of descriptions of pediatric diagnoses, medications used for the diagnoses, the role of OT for children with these diagnoses, descriptions of OT interventions used, and community/online resources for caregivers to utilize such as support groups or external help. Based on the needs of a school-based OT, resources on primitive reflexes were also created and consisted of descriptions of the reflexes as well as instructions on exercises to do at home to help integrate the reflexes. Advocacy was displayed throughout my Capstone as I created a social media page and content to raise awareness of these pediatric diagnoses and how important an OT's role is in treatment. Last but not least, my biggest role in advanced community practice was being a part of Camp Lakeside where I led activities targeting different functional skills for primary-aged children and created and distributed parent letters for caregivers. These letters consisted of descriptions of activities that I led at camp that could easily be transferred to the home. All of the material created throughout my Capstone was distributed to OT practitioners in the community and campers' caregivers.



Keeley Jones

Doctoral Capstone: Agriculture as an Occupation

Faculty Mentor: Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

Agriculture as an Occupation' sought to be an avenue for independence for all populations. Showing livestock, leadership roles, routines for the upkeep of a farm or ranch, and more, are occupation-based. The disparity between agriculture and students' special education was easy to identify, which is unfortunate since there is an incredible opportunity for independence. This capstone focused on bridging the gap between SPED and agriculture through agriculture-based activities, which allowed students to learn through doing and find their 'just right' challenge, where they felt confident and successful. Activities with livestock, woodworking, landscaping, field trips to local farms, and more presented educational and occupational engagement opportunities. To supplement the activities, an in-service to Arkansas agriculture educators and 4-H leaders was provided to equip these individuals with the knowledge to support students with varying abilities. Agriculture educators at the state in-service sessions learned about adaptations and modifications for various needs, lessons, and activities they could implement in their own schools, the importance of agriculture for all populations, inclusion, and more. To complete this capstone, a guide was created for individuals with special considerations, whether those are sensory needs, physical needs, etc., who wish to show livestock. In collaboration with a young man and his family, who are showing lambs and has Down Syndrome, the guide was created as a resource for those wishing to show those who may not have the knowledge where to start. This capstone pushed the ideology that agriculture is for everyone, and the positive impact has only begun.



Madelyn Jumper

Doctoral Capstone: Implementation of Support Groups on Dementia Clients and Caregivers

Faculty Mentor: Lorrie George-Paschal, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP

Abstract:

The focus of this capstone project was program development through the implementation of support groups for those with Dementia and their caregivers. In order to increase participation and a sense of well-being and quality of life in individuals with Dementia, the support group developed was a modified version of the previously developed S-TAP program. Program participants engaged in activities such as crafts, cognitive stimulation, and exercise. The program was guided by the occupational-based model of Occupational Adaptation (OA). Program participants reported positive feelings from having been a part of the group.



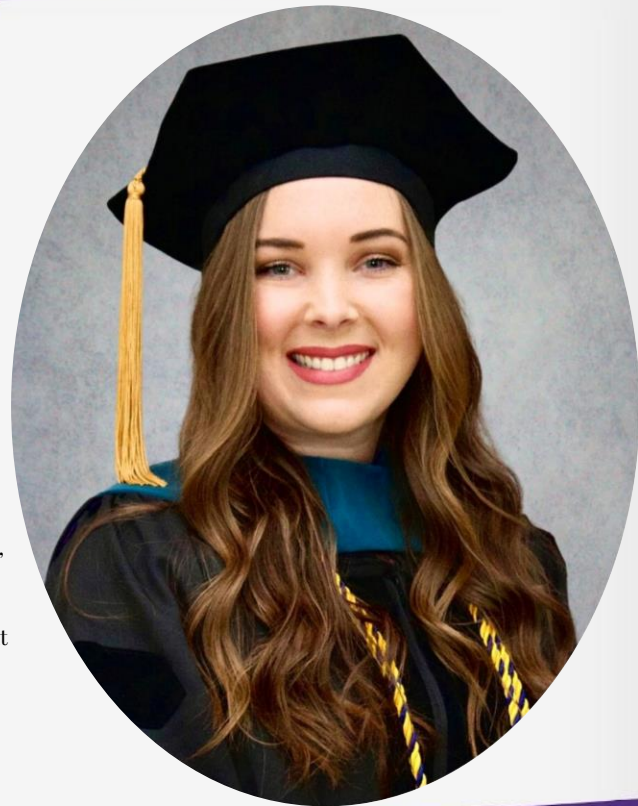
Brittany Lindsey

Doctoral Capstone: The Role of Occupational Therapy in Physical, Emotional, and Educational Success in Deaf and Blind Pediatric Populations

Faculty Mentor: Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone project was to aid in the education of and advocacy for current occupational therapy practitioners' role in physical, emotional, and educational success in the deaf and blind pediatric populations. This project included six weeks of advanced clinical practice at the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Arkansas School for the Deaf. The project also consisted of the development of educational materials that support occupational therapy's role in the treatment of these populations.



Everett Matthews

Doctoral Capstone: Improving occupational performance in seniors through the use of exercise and pickleball with an emphasis on Parkinson's Disease

Faculty Mentor: Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone project addressed program development, advocacy, and clinical practice skills. The goal of this capstone experience was to develop a community program to improve seniors' occupational performance with an emphasis on seniors diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. After earning an LSVT BIG certification and observing certified therapists, a 9-week exercise and pickleball-based program was developed. A pre and post-survey was administered to measure the participants' perceived effectiveness of the program in the three target areas of balance, independence in daily tasks, and overall movement. The results indicated a positive outcome was achieved in all 3 areas. Additionally, to further the understanding of Parkinson's Disease and its treatment for Occupational Therapists, an educational module was developed for future practitioners.



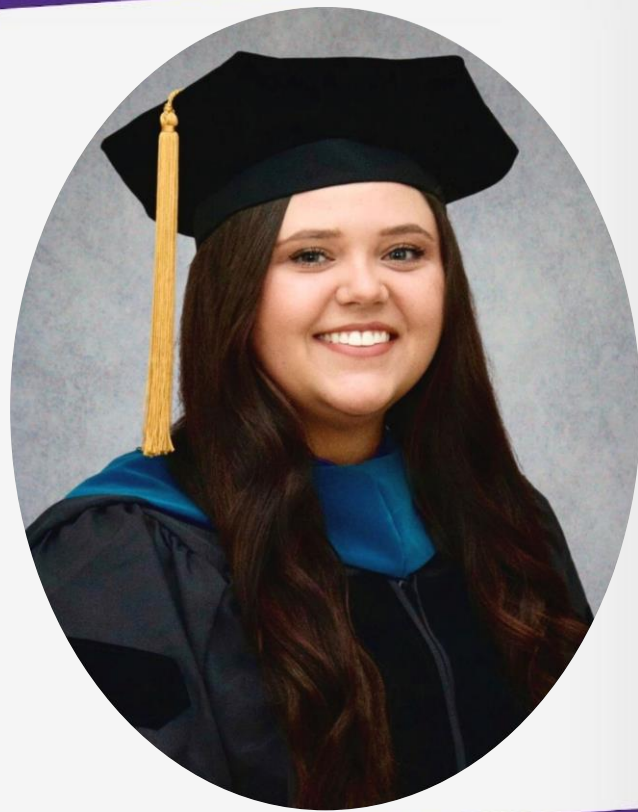
Hannah McCormick

Doctoral Capstone: Providing a Successful Learning Environment for All Students: A Teacher's Guide to Environmental Modifications

Faculty Mentor: Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This capstone project focused on education for teachers regarding environmental modifications within their classrooms. I worked with the Mena Public Schools to observe teachers and their classroom environments and with Progressive Therapy Kids to observe occupational therapists within the schools. The goal was to educate teachers on environmental modifications in the classroom through in-services and provide an educational document for them to utilize as a resource. This was achieved through observations and environmental assessments, presenting in-services over inclusive learning environments (in person and virtually), the creation of social media posts, and the creation of a resource guide for teachers. Evaluations were collected to measure the effectiveness of the in-service content presented and the functionality of the resource guide.



Carey McKay

Doctoral Capstone: roOTs: Nature-based Activities, Implementation and Universal Design within the Scope of Occupational Therapy

Faculty Mentor: Tina A. Mankey, Ed.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

This capstone project, titled "ROOTS: Nature-Based Activities, Implementation and Universal Design within the Scope of Occupational Therapy", focused on connecting children with nature through purposeful play. Though research shows the emotional and physical benefits of play in nature are abundant, the emerging practice area has a need for increased education and awareness. Looking through an OT lens, the author created nature-based activities that were shared with parents and practitioners through social media platforms. The activities were implemented with groups of kids throughout the Central Arkansas area so that activities could be trialed and adapted before they were shared. Along with activity ideas, the roOTs content contained educational elements to give both parents and practitioners a deeper understanding of what skills each activity targets. Additionally, the capstone included a universal design of outdoor classroom spaces to provide areas that meet the sensory, mental, emotional, and physical needs of all students in local schools. The project's purpose was to educate parents and practitioners on how children flourish in an outdoor environment and inspire them to take therapy sessions or everyday play outside.



Hannah Melton

Doctoral Capstone: Wild About Wildlife: An Education- and Awareness-Based Day Event for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Their Families and Caregivers

Faculty Mentor: Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone experience centered around advocacy and education to provide individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity to engage in wildlife-associated recreation. Wild About Wildlife was an inclusive family event hosted in collaboration with the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission and The Arc for the River Valley at the Janet Huckabee River Valley Nature Center in Fort Smith, AR. The purpose of this event was to provide participants, families, and caregivers hands-on educational experiences in fishing, archery, shooting BB guns, and canoeing/kayaking to provide them with the necessary skills and confidence to adopt these activities as new occupations and later complete them independently. Parents and caregivers were also provided resources to facilitate and encourage outdoor engagement for young children. A survey given to parents and caregivers showed satisfaction with the event and the event's components. All parents and caregivers reported that they/their participants learned something new and would attend this event again in the future.



Anna Grace Miller

Doctoral Capstone: A Kickstart to the Pediatric Setting: Selecting and Implementing Pediatric Interventions and Activities

Faculty Mentor: Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This 14-week capstone project involved collaboration with occupational therapists (OTs) in Arkansas and Texas, encompassing various pediatric settings like outpatient clinics, NICUS, schools, and early intervention facilities. The primary goal was to gain knowledge and experience in innovative intervention and activity selection. Within the guidebook, a repository of external links was incorporated, fostering the development of activities tailored to meet individual needs and therapeutic objectives. By integrating these valuable resources, therapists can cultivate greater flexibility and adaptability in addressing diverse pediatric conditions effectively. The outcome of this collaboration is a comprehensive pediatric guidebook, comprising over 100 slides of innovative interventions, tips, and essential insights for working with pediatric populations. The guidebook serves as a valuable resource, aiding therapists in developing activities through curated external links. Throughout the project, the Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance (PEOP) and Occupational Adaptation (OA) models served as guiding frameworks, emphasizing a holistic and client-centered approach. The project underscored the significance of aspiring to a level of competency aligned with the demands of fieldwork or practice within pediatric settings. Mastery of interventions and adaptive strategies was highlighted, promoting optimal patient outcomes and professional growth. Through collaborative efforts, the creation of a comprehensive guidebook, multimedia resources, and social media engagement, a dynamic platform has been established. Thus, fostering continuous learning and innovation within the realm of pediatric occupational therapy practice.



Kailey Miller

Doctoral Capstone: Occupational Therapy Intervention and Advocacy with the Homeless Population

Faculty Mentor: Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

During this project, Occupational Therapy intervention was provided to residents at Bethlehem House in Conway, AR. Additionally, a pro bono program was developed that any occupational therapist could follow at this site. This project utilized data gathered from intervention sessions to advocate for the state government for more funding for the homeless population, especially concerning funding occupational therapy services. It was found that when receiving occupational therapy services, 70% of the clients were able to meet their goals within ten weeks. These residents gained the ability to build resumes, interview for jobs, make a budget, manage mental health symptoms, and complete legal obligations for parole. Going forward, the pro bono program will focus on providing a higher quantity of homeless individuals with education on resume building and budgeting. When completing the government advocacy portion of this project, this information was shared with state representatives and the Housing and Urban Development program. The results of this communication are unknown at this time.



Georvonna Porter

Doctoral Capstone: Above, Beneath, and Beyond the Skin

Faculty Mentor: Mark Ellis, OTR/L, CHT

Abstract:

Wound care is consistent with every stage of wound management including diagnosing the wound type, considering factors to healing, and determining the most appropriate and proper treatment. A retrospective chart review was conducted over a 12-week period at Conway Human Development Center (CHDC) to closely observe wound healing and the factors that coincide within. CHDC was selected as an appropriate facility for this retrospective chart review because of its diverse patient population and its focal point in wound care management. Wound care services at CHDC were directed and supervised by an experienced Registered Nurse who possessed expertise in wound care. Wound healing and management have many contributing factors. A survey was conducted among different healthcare professionals and healthcare students to determine the most common factors in wound healing. Most commonly, survey participants stated that age, infection, comorbidities, nutrition, and lifestyle were the most known factors that contribute to healing wounds. Within the 12-week period conducted at CHDC, additional factors to wound healing were observed for the advocacy of holistic client care. In addition to the factors most known, skin types, skin integrity, cognition, mobility, number of wounds, wound size, and climate are determined to better fit a holistic approach to wound care. The Wound Care Check assessment chart was created and designed as an appropriate non-standardized assessment tool to aid in clinical reasoning skills to help guide occupational therapy practitioners to understand all client factors, personal factors, and the barriers and challenges that inhibit occupational performances.



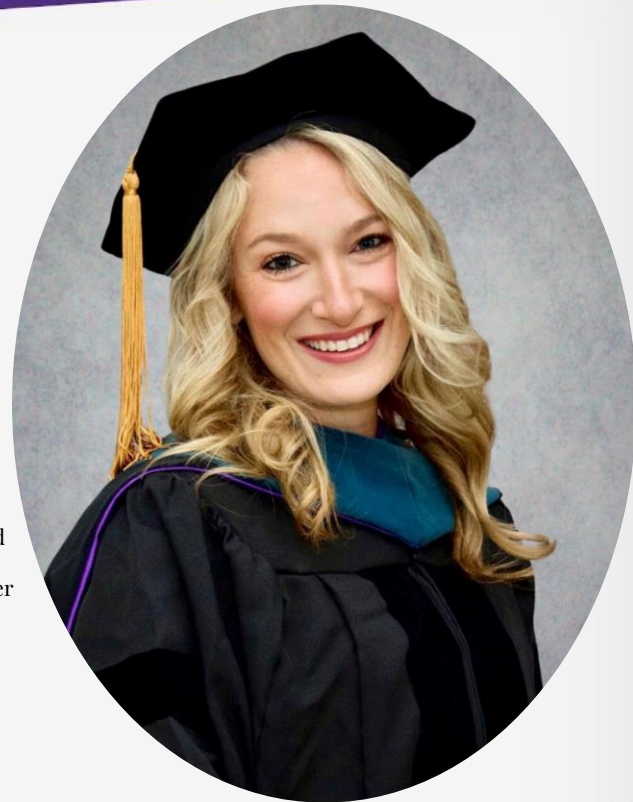
Danielle Poteet

Doctoral Capstone: Educating and Supporting Foster/Adoptive Families on Mental Health Needs in Their Foster/Adoptive Children

Faculty Mentor: Deborah Gangluff, Sc.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone experience focused on advocating for foster children's mental health and education in trauma-informed care and the significance of occupational therapy in the mental health field. A non-profit organization, Duffel of Dreams, was established to raise awareness for foster children's needs and advocate for the importance of mental health support in the foster care system. Through the charity, a website was created where educational blogs based on trauma-informed care were posted, and community resources were given. In-person presentations were also given, and meetings were conducted to bring light to childhood trauma and the critical role occupational therapists hold in the mental health world.



Jennifer Roman

Doctoral Capstone: Handwriting Interventions for Adult Stroke Survivors with Hemiparesis

Faculty Mentor: Mark Ellis, OTR/L, CHT

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone experience centered around advanced clinical practice and education through the creation of a handwriting resource guide for occupational therapy practitioners who work with adults with neurological conditions in both outpatient and inpatient rehabilitation centers. Throughout this doctoral capstone experience, advanced clinical practice was obtained at Baptist Health Rehabilitation Institute – Outpatient Clinic and Conway Regional Rehabilitation Hospital to implement evidence-based handwriting interventions and from the Provisional Certified Brain Injury Specialist certification to increase knowledge in neurorehabilitation. In addition, education was addressed through the composition of a handwriting resource guide that highlights handwriting components, musculature related to handwriting with notable stretches and exercises, handwriting tools, letter groupings, handwriting considerations, and handwriting approaches which include task-specific training, strategies, therapeutic interventions, and complementary interventions. This handwriting resource guide was published as an e-book and provided to the two rehabilitation centers and as a free resource for other occupational therapy practitioners interested in methods to address handwriting for adults with neurological conditions.



Noah Sapp

Doctoral Capstone: The Role of Occupational Therapy in Diabetes Education and Self-Management

Faculty Mentor: Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This capstone experience was designed to further shed light on the need for more occupational therapist (OT) involvement in diabetes education and self-management as well as to equip OTs with resources and tools to support the OT profession in this area of practice. The goal was accomplished through the creation of an educational in-service, in-depth research paper, and a resource-providing website. The educational in-service was provided to occupational therapists and focused on identifying the impact of diabetes on clients' occupational engagement, and how occupational services can improve diabetes self-management. The in-service had a pre-test and post-test to measure the in-service's impact on the participants' knowledge and confidence regarding diabetes care as an OT. The research paper was created to promote the role of occupational therapy in diabetes care. The research is composed of literature reviews and in-service pre and post-tests. The research shows how beneficial occupational therapy can be in diabetes education and self-care but how OT has a minimal presence in this area due to a lack of education and consequently confidence. A website was created to be an ever-growing resource that can be referenced in the area of diabetes self-care and education. This capstone project expanded my own knowledge about diabetes and contributed to enhancing the overall knowledge and confidence of occupational therapy providers in dealing with diabetic clients. By equipping healthcare professionals with essential information, this project aimed to improve diabetes management, leading to better client outcomes and enhanced quality of life.



Molly Shearer

Doctoral Capstone: The Role of Occupational Therapy in Managing Neurological Conditions and the Importance of Advocacy and Accessibility

Faculty Mentor: Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone experience focused on advanced clinical practice and advocacy. Advanced clinical practice included the areas of neurological rehabilitation and communication with Spanish-speaking clients in the healthcare setting. Clinical skills in neurorehabilitation were gained through a four-week clinical experience in the outpatient setting as well as attainment of the Provisional Certified Brain Injury Specialist Certification. Clinical skills in communication with Spanish-speaking clients were gained through the completion of a Medical Spanish curriculum as well as the completion of a certification exam for a Qualified Bilingual Staff Credential. Advocacy efforts focused on advocating for the role of occupational therapy in managing Parkinson's disease as well as advocating for increased access to quality healthcare in occupational therapy practice for Spanish-speaking clients with limited English proficiency (LEP). Advocacy efforts for the role of OT in managing Parkinson's disease included the development of educational fliers which were then dispersed to a local community resource for individuals with Parkinson's disease. Advocacy efforts for accessibility to quality healthcare for Spanish-speaking clients with LEP included the development of patient education materials written in Spanish as well as an OT Resource Guide for working with Spanish-speaking patients that address both the cultural and linguistic aspects of communication. These resources were delivered to the Baptist Medical Group Outpatient Center to support therapist-patient communication and patient education.



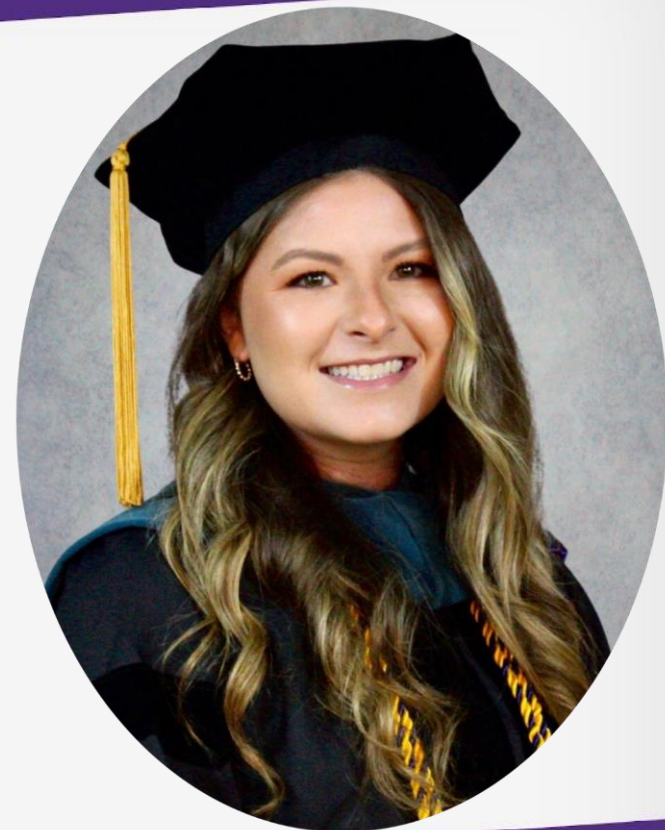
Hallie Smith

Doctoral Capstone: Empowering Students by Building Confidence and Life Skills Through Increased Occupational Performance, Dynamic Teamwork, and Interactive Mentorship

Faculty Mentor: January Schultz, PhD

Abstract:

This Capstone Project focused on program development, advanced clinical skills, advocacy, leadership, and education while empowering students by building confidence and life skills through increased occupational performance, dynamic teamwork, and interactive mentorship within the Clarksville School District. This program highlighted student-driven engagement by emphasizing healthy social, emotional, and physical well-being while learning the game of soccer. Fostering critical life skills was a key component of the program, allowing each student to understand themselves, the importance of relationships and teamwork, and their impact on their school and community. 103 students in grades 2nd through 5th participated in the Panther Little Kickers 5-week after-school program and 2 optional half-time performances. The program explored interactive mentorship to encourage, guide, and motivate each student. Along with program development, advanced clinical skills within the occupational therapy school-based setting were gained through collaboration with intra and inter-disciplinary teams within Clarksville Schools. The student participated in clinical observation, evaluation, and intervention planning for kindergarten through high school students. Educational modules were made for Clarksville School District to emphasize the importance of psychosocial factors of students, the development of critical life skills through the program, and the need for occupational therapy services within the school-based setting. Throughout the Capstone experience, the student participated in self-directed learning and promotion of the UCA OTD core values, which include advocacy, leadership, and professionalism.



Kenzi Spurgin

Doctoral Capstone: Empowering Students by Building Confidence and Life Skills Through Increased Occupational Performance, Dynamic Teamwork, and Interactive Mentorship

Faculty Mentor: Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

Diffrent Strokes is a community-based program designed to promote inclusion among individuals of all abilities. The program provided opportunities for individuals with and without disabilities to engage in the leisure activity of golf. The vision of the program was to encourage individuals to connect and support one another using engagement in meaningful occupations as a motivating factor. The program was expanded to a rural community in Mena, Arkansas. Participants met weekly at the Ouachita Golf course to engage in the game of golf and/or activities related to the sport. Activities were selected to target a variety of skill levels by grading up/down the task. Adaptations and modifications were implemented and trialed on an individual basis each week. Qualitative research was conducted to explore the participant's personal experiences of the program and to determine the impact community-based sports programs had in relation to occupational engagement and social participation. Six participants were interviewed at the conclusion of the program. Transcription of interviews and thematic analysis was performed by the investigator. Data analysis revealed three major themes: 1) exposure to a new leisure activity broke barriers to occupational engagement 2) inclusive environments attributed to overall success and growth 3) there is a need for community-based programs in rural areas. The findings from this study suggest that community-based adaptive sports programs in rural areas have a positive impact on an individual's occupational engagement. Further research is needed as adaptive golf continues to grow and become more recognized in the world of sports.



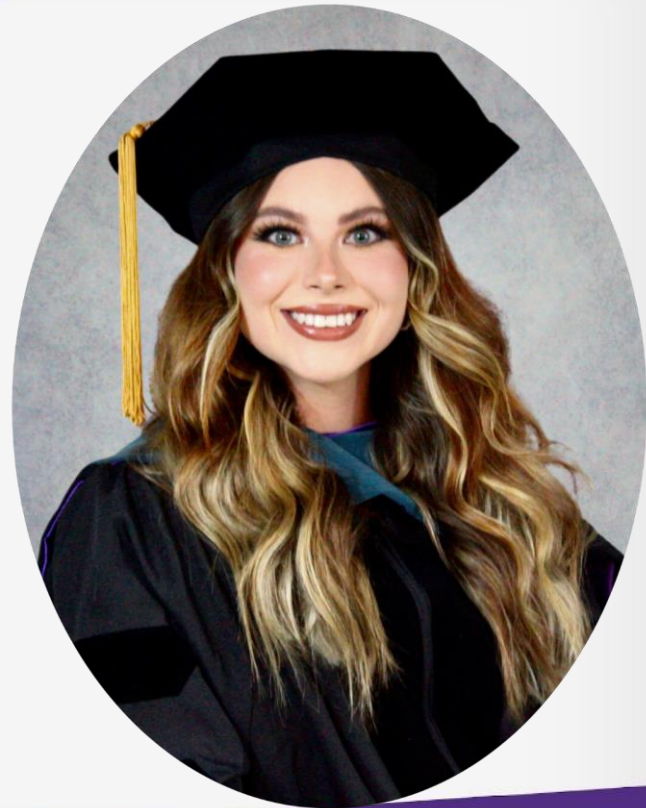
Cirstin Sullens

Doctoral Capstone: Clinician and Occupational Therapy
Assistant Student Education: Low Vision Across the Lifespan

Faculty Mentor: Lorrie George-Paschal, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP

Abstract:

The main goal of my capstone project was to increase awareness and provide education to occupational therapists and students in hopes to provide more services to the underserved low-vision population within the state of Arkansas. My capstone project targeted advanced clinical skills in low vision and was obtained through clinical experiences, low vision courses, and by attending the international low vision rehabilitation conference 2023. The knowledge I gained throughout these experiences was used to educate occupational therapy assistant students and occupational therapy practitioners on low vision. Additionally, I focused on advocating to eye care professionals on occupational therapy's role in low vision and promoting the need for collaboration between the professions to improve the low vision populations' quality of life and ability to participate in meaningful occupations.



Carol Thompson

Doctoral Capstone: Do More For You: Life Skills Camp for Transitional Aged Youth

Faculty Mentor: Tina A. Mankey, Ed.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

Transitioning into adulthood is a pivotal stage of life for all adolescents and young adults. Adolescents and young adults with disabilities have increased challenges and barriers during this transition period. Therefore, the purpose of this capstone project was to design and implement a program that educates, encourages, and motivates adolescents and young adults with disabilities to strive for independence through the transition to adulthood. Activities and education provided through this program focused on the foundational life skills of leisure and personal care. Additionally, this program provides resources for parents to assist their transitioning youth further. Evaluation of this new program was assessed by pre- and post-program surveys from participants as well as program volunteers. This program was partnered with Camp Aldersgate, Inc., a camp for kids with special needs, to aid with participant recruitment, finances, and staffing in hopes that this program could be sustained at this organization or recreated on a larger scale following the conclusion of this capstone experience.



Kassidy Thompson Sawyer

Doctoral Capstone: Further Development of the Conway Brain Injury Community Program: An Occupational Adaptation Approach to Fostering Community Reintegration

Faculty Mentor: Lorrie George-Paschal, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone project was focused on advanced clinical practice, leadership, and research within the neurorehabilitation setting. Advanced clinical skills were obtained through various clinical experiences at Baylor Scott & White Institute, Conway Regional Rehabilitation Hospital, and Timber Ridge. Knowledge gained throughout these experiences and from a review of the literature was then utilized to create a guide to evidenced-based intervention on community reintegration following acquired brain injury as well as simulated community reintegration activities used for intervention. In addition to this, research was conducted on the Conway Brain Injury Community program using a mixed-method design to determine the perceived effectiveness that the program has on meeting members' self-identified goals and assisting in their integration into the community based on the theory of occupational adaptation.



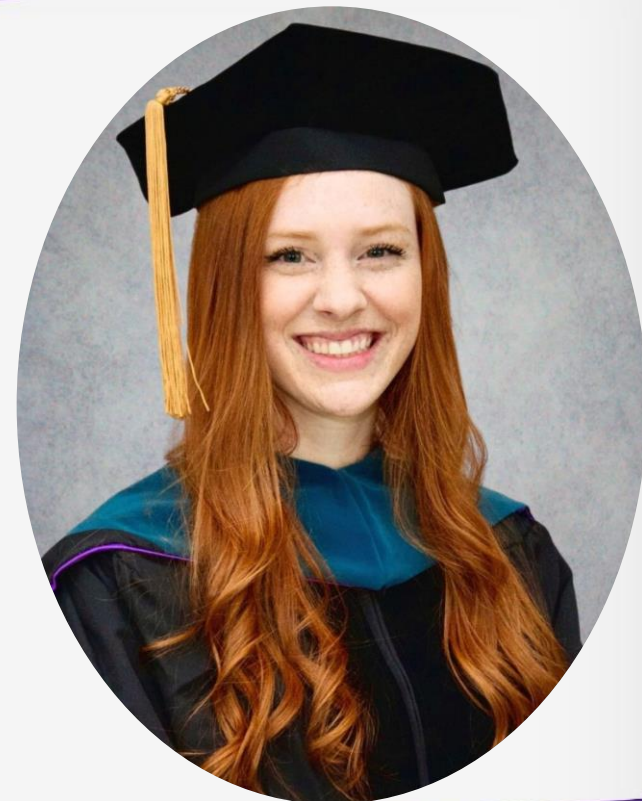
Leah Trusty

Doctoral Capstone: Exploring Play With Young Children and Their Caregivers

Faculty Mentor: Deborah Gangluff, Sc.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone project was to advocate for meaningful play in the early years using occupational therapy-related support. It educated caregivers about play as one of the most primary occupations that a child participates in and its impact on the development of cognitive, physical, and social-emotional skills, along with other integral skills a child learns in his early years. The initial aim of this capstone project was to create and implement playgroups at Friendship Developmental Preschool in Russellville, AR, and in the Russellville community in order to facilitate occupational engagement and participation in play between caregivers and young children of all ability levels. In addition, the project included a research project to determine the perceived effectiveness of the parent/child playgroup series. The results revealed statistically significant gains in knowledge for each session and the entire playgroup series combined. The project also included a collection of educational resources regarding developmentally appropriate play skills for young children with the goal of enhancing the caregiver's confidence pertaining to play and fostering play skills. Furthermore, the education portion of the capstone included in-service modules presented to the teachers at Pediatrics Plus in Russellville. The topics included the benefits of play, defending the evidence of play, types of play, the role of the adult in play, and strategies to support play. This experience contributed to the advancement of occupational therapy as a bridge to explore the gap of play as a co-occupation of young children of all abilities and their caregivers.



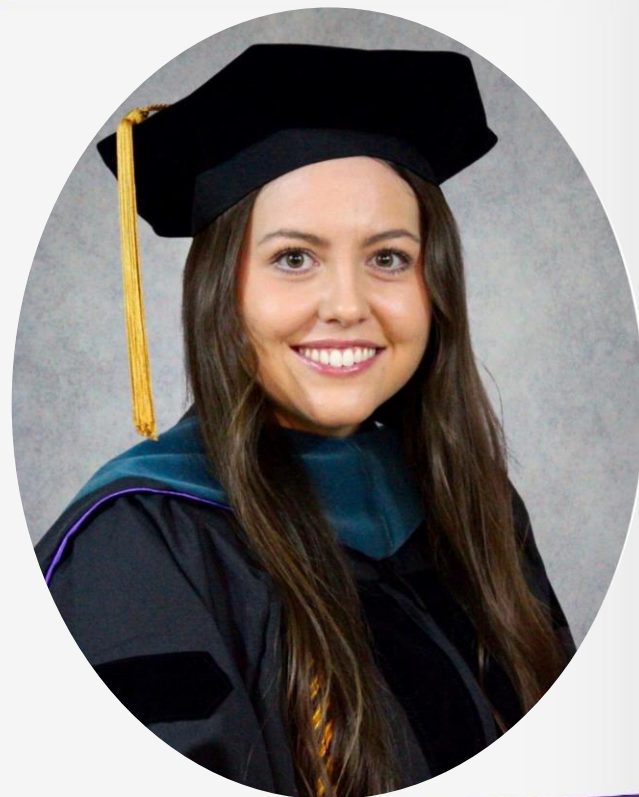
Bailey Tyler

Doctoral Capstone: Your Favorite OT Mentor: A Podcast Series
Dedicated to Informing Individuals on the Process of Being an
Occupational Therapy Student

Faculty Mentor: January Schultz, PhD

Abstract:

This Doctoral Capstone project focused on advocacy, education, and leadership by creating a resource platform to inform and assist students and individuals wanting to pursue an occupational therapy program while promoting the University of Central Arkansas' Occupational Therapy program. Over the course of this capstone experience, the student developed a twenty-five-episode podcast series detailing the process of being an occupational therapy student. The UCA OTD program was promoted by the student by comparing UCA information and statistics against the other three OTD programs within Arkansas, as well as utilizing UCA students for interviews. The student collaborated with members of UCA organizations, including the Student Occupational Therapy Association, Student Caucus for Diversity in Occupational Therapy, Pi Theta Epsilon, and Students of Pre-Occupational Therapy; as well as students from all of the cohorts in the UCA OTD program to create episodes. The episodes educated listeners by discussing topics such as, how to apply for doctoral occupational therapy programs. Prerequisites most often required, the interview process, how to determine which program is the best fit, tuition, and financial aid, what an average week entails for a student in each year of the program, the student fieldwork experience in a variety of settings, and the capstone project process and experience. The outcomes of this podcast series address several of the UCA OTD program's core values, such as innovation, inclusion, advocacy, and excellence. In addition to the podcast series, an Instagram account was also created to promote the occupational therapy profession and acquire listener growth.



Jacob Whitworth

Doctoral Capstone: Transgender Views on Occupational Therapy

Faculty Mentor: Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Abstract:

This capstone project sought to identify if transgender clients perceive occupational therapy as a positive experience. By using a pilot study into the topic, I had 112 occupational therapists take a survey, and 4 transgender participants take a survey. From this study, it was found that most therapists think they are knowledgeable and create a positive experience, and they think their coworkers create negative experiences. From the small population of transgender participants, they said that there was a lack of knowledge surrounding their gender and that other staff in the clinic created a negative experience.



Keci Wilson

Doctoral Capstone: Family-Centered Care in Pediatrics

Faculty Mentor: January Schultz, PhD

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone experience was designed with a focus on utilizing advocacy and education to promote family-centered care in diverse pediatric settings. According to a review of the current literature, family-centered care is considered a best practice in pediatrics, however, there are challenges in translating family-centered care from theory to practice for health care providers. This project examined the role of occupational therapists in promoting family-centered principles through education, collaborative efforts between parents and therapists, coaching of caregivers, and family empowerment. The site experience was conducted in partnership with families of children receiving early intervention services in academic, outpatient, and home-based settings. A variety of educational handouts and learning materials were distributed to families, as well as coaching opportunities to ensure that care was responsive to each family's unique values and needs, and to encourage parent self-efficacy in managing their child's disabilities. For future guidance and support, each family received a comprehensive set of resources for future use.



Julie Yang

Doctoral Capstone: Development of the Occupational Therapy Compatibility Test: What Practice Setting Best Fits You?

Faculty Mentor: Deborah Gangluff, Sc.D., OTR/L

Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone project was to implement a practice-setting compatibility assessment tool to the UCA OT program to enhance student exploration and support self-efficacy in professional development in occupational therapy. The research was conducted to support the implementation of the practice area assessment, the Occupational Therapy Compatibility Test (OTCT). The educational resources contributed to the development of the compatibility tool and to department education. Although the results in this study indicated no statistically significant relationship between OT students and the benefits of the OTCT, the qualitative data and the average of students favoring the OTCT, provide enough evidence to support the practical significance of utilizing the OTCT to students. Furthermore, there was a positive correlation between the benefits of OTCT and the comfortability to pursue the result of OTCT. This is an indicator of building clinical confidence in students before transitioning into practice. Although diversity makes the profession appealing, it can also be discouraging to OT students and new practitioners as clinical skills are heavily influenced by each specific setting or area. It is important that OT programs include confidence-building elements, such as the OTCT, to support the successful transition from student to practitioner and help future job satisfaction in the OT field. The outcomes of this research have provided insight into the development and implementation of a practice area assessment for OT students and contributed to the literature on OT.



Jennifer Yang-Ramirez

Doctoral Capstone: Home Exercise Adherence: The Importance of Relating Functional Activities to Prescribed Home Exercises

Faculty Mentor: Mark Ellis, OTR/L, CHT

Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone project is to create a resource for therapists and students to help promote patient adherence to home exercises or also known as home exercise programs (HEPs) while staying occupation-focused and following best practice guidelines. There are many factors that affect patient adherence such as therapist-patient relationships, health literacy and language barriers, time, motivation, and patient factors. As occupational therapists our practices should be occupational focused, however, in an orthopedic or rehabilitative setting it can be difficult due to the nature of these settings. Through this capstone project a resource book was compiled and donated to the student's expert mentors' clinical sites and to the occupational therapy program for use in treatments and for education. The resource book will contain student-created HEP handouts that relate rote exercises to functional activities, common orthopedic conditions and protocols, anatomy, commutation resources, common phrases translated into Spanish, and best practice guidelines as defined by the American Occupational Therapy Association. The aim of the handouts was to help patients better understand the purpose of their prescribed HEP and as a result, hopefully, increase adherence. The additional resources in the resource book will be for the purpose of educating students and therapists to help them in the prescription of HEPs.

