

## Occupational Therapy Assistant Program

### Philosophy:

The Felician University Occupational Therapy Assistant Program believes that humans learn through active participation and engagement in occupations, which can positively contribute to the health and wellness of individuals, groups, and populations across the lifespan. The program embraces students as professionals-in-training as well as “occupational beings who are in dynamic transaction with the teaching-learning process” (AOTA, 2018). At the core of the program’s philosophy is a collaborative and inclusive approach for all types of learners, whereby students and educators are continuously engaged in a process of professional development and self-reflection.

Felician University’s program strives to educate emerging practitioners as lifelong learners and advocates for the profession. By integrating professional values, theories, evidence, ethical diversity and skills through active participation in meaningful occupations, students build a foundation of understanding the basic right of humans as occupational beings. Based on this the program’s philosophy stems from the mission and curricular threads including **occupation- and evidence-based practice, service, and professionalism.**

The program’s didactic and practical learning experiences, from various contextual environments, allows for students to continuously build upon the knowledge and experience to embrace the skills needed to provide quality client-centered, **occupation-based** interventions. Students acquire professional and clinical reasoning, critical thinking, and cultural understanding using **evidence-based** knowledge during classroom lectures, while simultaneously participating in active, engaging, diverse, and inclusive learning experiences such as role-plays, simulations, and practicums. Furthermore, continuous reinforcement through active repetition and hands on learning solidifies the influence of meaningful occupations and interventions across the lifespan in the development of health promotion, wellness, remediation, and restoration for developmental or acquired disease and injury.

In alliance with the mission and philosophy of Felician University, the occupational therapy assistant program emphasizes providing students with practical learning experiences to prepare them to meet the challenges of the new century with informed minds and understanding hearts, including self-knowledge, **service to others**, and respect for all creation. Simultaneously, the AOTA views education in occupational therapy as “an ongoing process that shapes a practitioner’s professional identity” (AOTA, 2018). To provide students with active learning experience to develop **professionalism** the occupational therapy assistant program encourages student engagement in active collaborative inter- and intra-professional projects and volunteer hours in both traditional and emerging practice settings. In addition, didactic coursework, fieldwork education, and personalized student mentoring and advisement throughout the program focuses on self-reflection and the student’s development of professional characteristics and traits, including respect, communication, compassion, and competence.

### Program Mission Statement

The Felician University Occupational Therapy Assistant Program, within the framework of Catholic tradition and commitments to Franciscan values, prepares a diverse student population with an education that provides the foundation for practice as an entry level occupational therapy assistant. The program curriculum utilizes a developmental approach to allow students to acquire technical knowledge and professional skills that address the occupational needs of groups, communities, and populations throughout the lifespan. **Occupation** as a determinant of health and wellness in a variety of practice settings is the basis for learning theory and **evidence-based** practice common to occupational therapy practitioners. Students will develop a sense of **professionalism** and **service to the community**, demonstrated by characteristics including respectful communication, competence, and compassion in both educational and community settings.

### Faculty

The current Felician University Faculty members are Donna M. Hicks, OTR/L, MSHA and Jeffery Goldberg, MOT. The program also welcomed adjunct professors, Kimberly Hurley, MOT, Susan Hoover, MOT, Jackie Calo, OTD, Lori Franklin, OTD, and Alyssa Lopez, BS, COTA to teach courses in respective areas of practice.

### Graduates

In January of 2023 seven students graduated from the OTA program and in May of 2023 8 more are expected to graduate.

### Recruitment

The Felician OTA program is currently recruiting students for the 25 seats available for the Fall of 2023.

Respectfully,

*Donna M. Hicks, MSHA, OTR/L*

Donna Hicks, MSHA, OTR/L

OTA Program Director/Academic Fieldwork Coordinator