

Welcome to the
Pitt OT Class of 2021
Virtual Recognition Event

Thursday, April 29, 2021
University of Pittsburgh



University of
Pittsburgh

Department of Occupational Therapy
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

Opening Address

Elizabeth R. Skidmore

PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, FACRM

Professor and Chair

Department of Occupational Therapy

Associate Dean for Research, SHRS



University of
Pittsburgh

Department of Occupational Therapy
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

Presentation of MS in OT Graduates

Amit Sethi

PhD, OTR/L

Assistant Professor

Director, MS in OT Program

Department of Occupational Therapy



University of
Pittsburgh

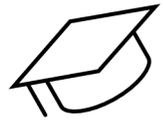
Department of Occupational Therapy
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

Master of Science in Occupational Therapy Graduates



University of
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School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences



Salamah Alshammari, MS

Accomplishments

- Coming to the US during the pandemic and getting a high GPA in the first semester.

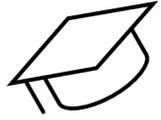
Acknowledgements

- I want to thank my family for all of their support and every Pitt OT member for facilitating our journey here.
- Special thanks to Dr. Leland, Dr. Toto, and Dr. Sethi, who mentored me, guided me, and helped me grow personally and professionally.

What are your future plans?

- I plan to move back to Saudi Arabia for one year then coming back to the US to pursue my PhD



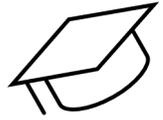


Talal Alshammari, MS

What are your future plans?

- Teach the new generations of OTs and help advance our profession in my country.





Munirah Alsubaie, MS

Accomplishments

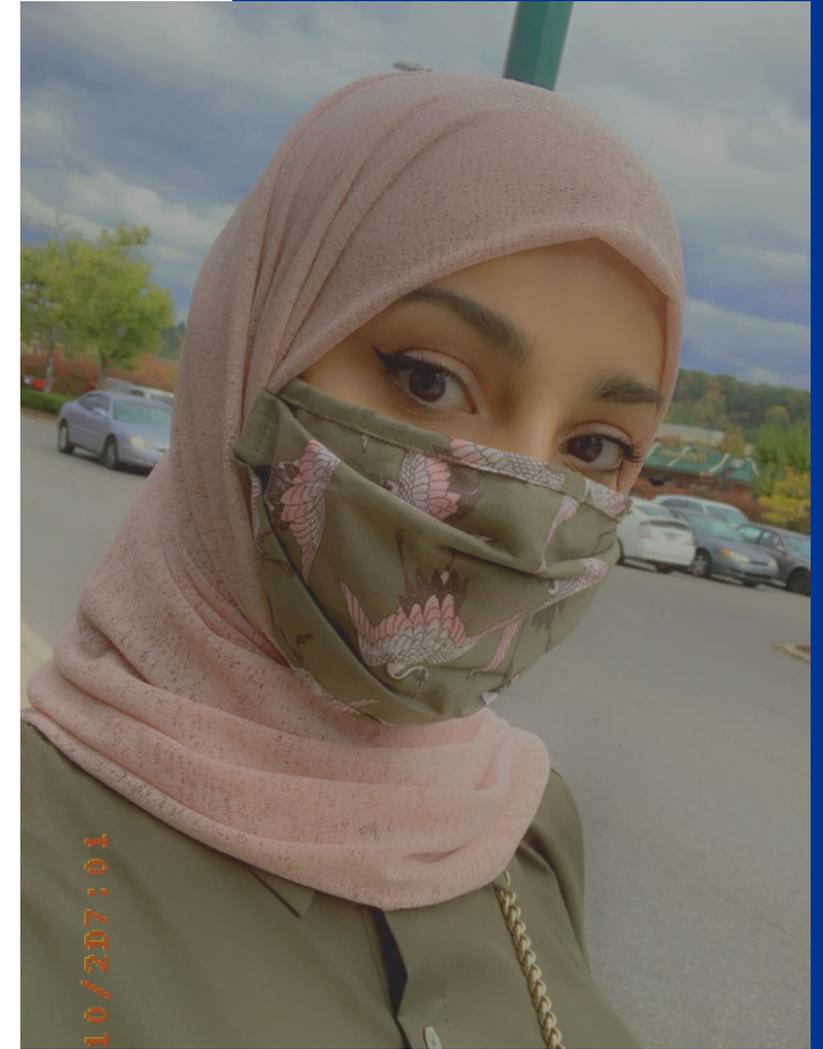
- Coming to the United States and getting my master's and a high GPA despite the pandemic (and the travel restrictions) was a huge accomplishment.

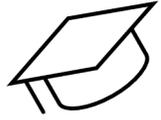
Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank all the faculty for their guidance and support during this journey. Special thanks to the most amazing mentor, Dr. Angela Caldwell, who helped me grow as an educator and a researcher. And to my family, I would not be here if it weren't for you.

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- I had the best experience in Pitt, especially working in the "Pediatric Health Promotion Research Laboratory."





Christy Ann Jain, MS

Accomplishments

- Graduating as a more knowledgeable and confident OT!

Acknowledgements

- A big thank you to my dad, mom, brother and sister for all the prayers and support throughout the year!
- I am very grateful to my fellow MS students, OTD and CScD Students. Thank you for being so welcoming and kind!
- Thank you to all my teachers for helping me become the OT I wanted to be:~)!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- The time Munirah lectured me for not ordering my regalia early (I've always wondered what being lectured by a big sister would feel like and I think this is the closest experience I will ever get!)





Hui-Ni Shen, MS

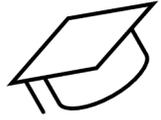
Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my parents, my boyfriend and my friends for all of their ongoing support and encouragement!

What are your future plans?

- My plan after graduation is to continue my OT career in pediatric or in hand therapy.





Yu-Chun Su, MS

Acknowledgements

- Special thanks to Mom and Dad, and the whole family for supporting and encouraging me throughout this journey.
- Thank you to the Pitt OT family for an amazing and unforgettable experience.

What are your future plans?

- After graduation, I plan to pursue a career in a pediatric or inpatient rehabilitation setting.



Presentation of MOT and OTD Graduates

Denise Chisholm

PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA

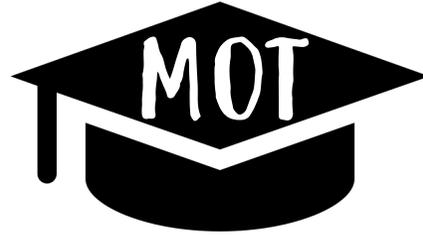
**Professor and Vice Chair for
Academic and Administrative Affairs
Director, MOT and OTD Programs
Department of Occupational Therapy**



University of
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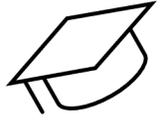
Department of Occupational Therapy
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

Master of Occupational Therapy Graduates



University of
Pittsburgh

Department of Occupational Therapy
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences



Camarie Shepard, MOT

Accomplishments

- Surviving grad school during a pandemic

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my friends for helping me thrive here!

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- Who I am as a person and what I bring to the table as a future disabled therapist matters. Advocacy is hard, but when we advocate for accessibility we build a more inclusive world.



Doctor of Occupational Therapy Graduates





Jason Amado, OTD

Accomplishments

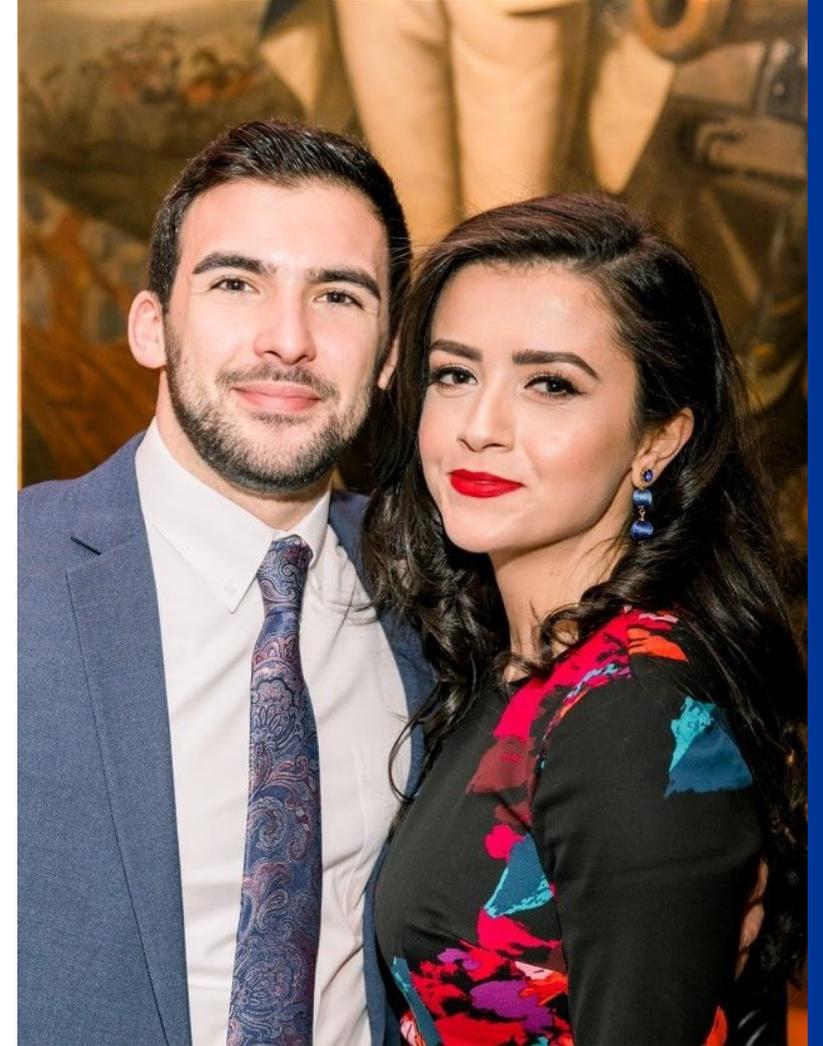
- Graduating (isn't that enough?)

Acknowledgements

- My family, my girlfriend and her family, my friends, and all the faculty that helped make this possible.

What are your future plans?

- Get a job as soon as possible and pay off my student debt!





Julia Beatty, OTD

Accomplishments

- Graduate Certificate in Gerontology
- Jewish Healthcare Foundation Death and Dying Fellow

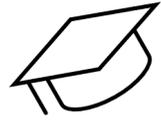
Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my parents, sister, and boyfriend for their support and encouragement.
- I also want to thank my friends and roommate for the nightly study sessions and laughs. I couldn't have done it without you!

What are your future plans?

- Pass the NBCOT, find a job working in acute care, and get a puppy.





Michelle Beck, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pediatric Research Assistant: studied sleep in boys with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (accepted at AOTA 2020)
- Pedagogy Badge (Teaching)
- Almost made it through a rotation at Children's Hospital without being pooped on

Acknowledgements

- Thanks to my parents and grandparents for their continuous encouragement and enthusiasm; to Greyson, for his patience and for helping see the bigger picture when it was needed; and my dog always listening to me complain

What are your future plans?

- Future plans: Be an awesome OT!





Giulia Berardi, OTD

Accomplishments

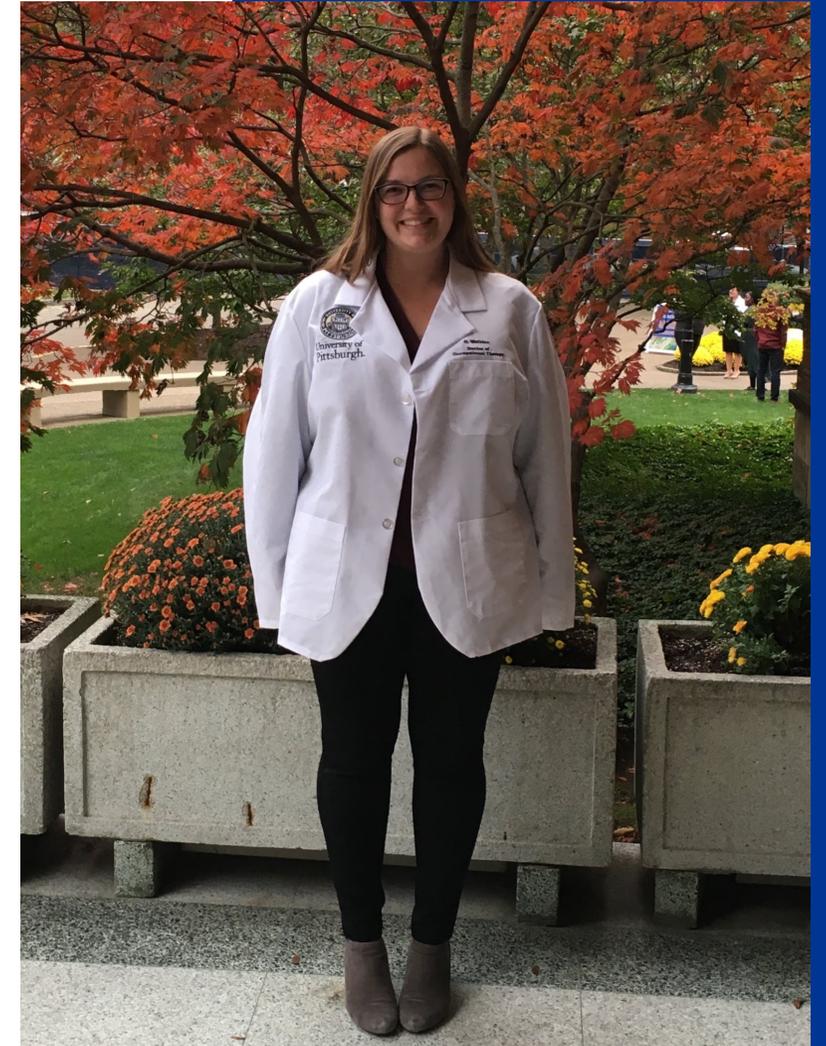
- Member of Pi Theta Epsilon Honor Society

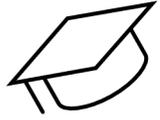
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family, especially my parents and husband, for their continuous love and support. Thank you to all my professors and fieldwork educators that encouraged me and helped me to develop the professional skills needed to be the best OT I can be. Thank you to all the friends I made over the past 3 years in this program! We did it!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- When Kelly and I met at the bus stop after orientation and how it led to making a solid friend group with Emily and Alex that will continue even after the program has ended. I couldn't have made it through this last year in the program without our frequent Zoom chats and chatting with Alex every day!





Desiree Bodziony, OTD

Accomplishments

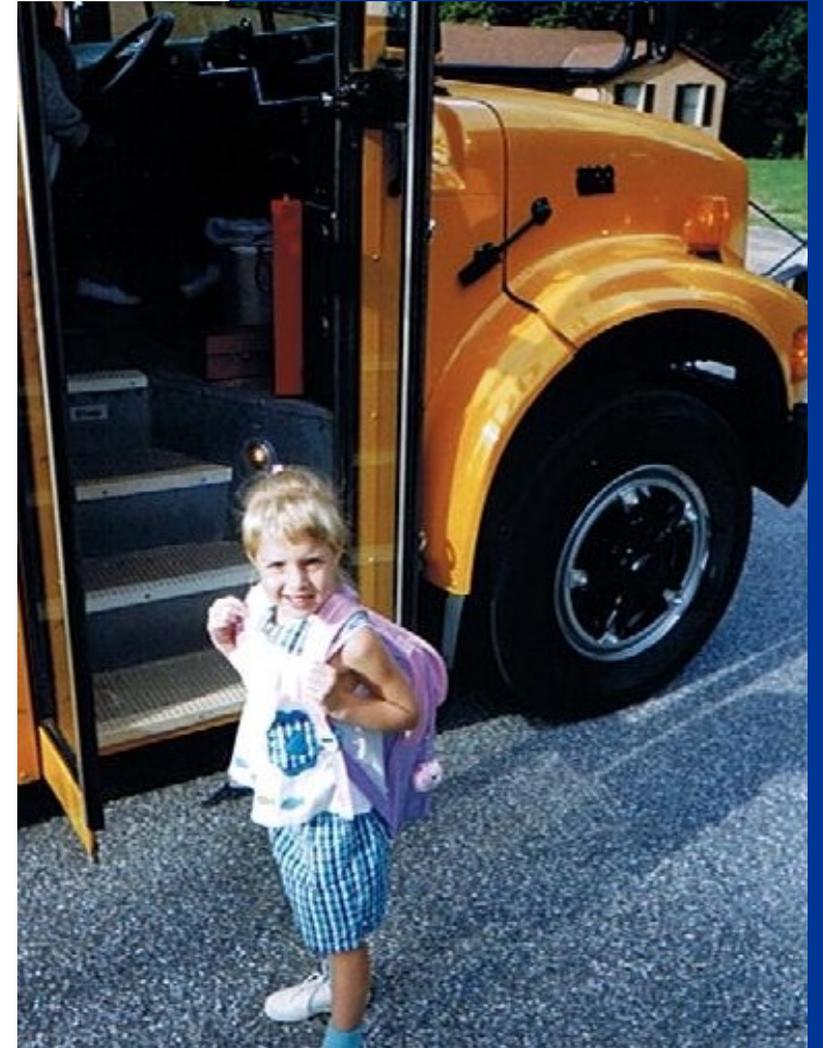
- Pitt OT mentor for first-year OTD students
- Served as an Ambassador for Civic Engagement (ACE) Fellow for the Institute of Politics, Elsie Hillman Civic Forum
- Survived my long-commute to and from school with the help of caffeine and an extensive playlist

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my wonderful grandparents for being my home away from home, my incredibly supportive parents who push me to achieve what I thought was impossible, my beautiful sisters, my boyfriend, my patient friends and my incredible mentors who helped me get to where I am today. I do not know what I would do without all of you!

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- Being adaptable and flexible is extremely difficult but quite necessary not only during OT school but in all aspects of life.





Meredith Buckbee, OTD

Accomplishments

- Being a member of PTE

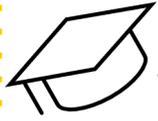
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family, friends and boyfriend for your support and encouragement throughout this journey, I couldn't have done it without you all!

What are your future plans?

- To get a dog, work in pediatrics and one day start an adaptive art program!





Stephanie Elaine Caggiano, OTD

Accomplishments

- Merit Scholarship Recipient

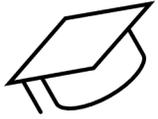
Acknowledgements

- I'd like to thank my parents, sister, and entire family for their continued support throughout my time at PITT. I'd also like to thank my professors, fieldwork supervisors and friends for all they have helped me accomplish!

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- From working with all my clients I've learned that "To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world" -Dr. Seuss





Alyssa Carson, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pitt Occupational Therapy Peer Mentor
- Course Assistant for Developmental Theory & Practice and Level I Fieldwork

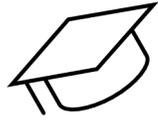
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my friends and family for supporting me throughout my education!
- I would also like to thank Pitt OT faculty for an amazing three years at Pitt!

What are your future plans?

- After graduation, I will be moving to Charlottesville, VA to pursue a career in pediatrics! :)





Cosette Carter, OTD

Accomplishments

- Inaugural Professional Pledge Ceremony Co-Chair
- WPXI-TV Pittsburgh Now Interviewee
- Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association (POTA) Student Representative

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my teachers, professors, and fieldwork educators for inspiring me and making me who I am today.
- Thank you to my classmates and lifelong friends for giving me a reason to cry happy and sad tears at graduation.
- And a special thank you to my parents for your unconditional love and for always telling me I can be anything I want.

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Working alongside friends to create the Live Life to the Fullest program for individuals affected by cancer





Shelby Cartwright, OTD

Accomplishments

- To be where I am today is an accomplishment but among my favorite are the ones that will outlast my place in this program. Co-founding the University of Pittsburgh Chapter of COTAD means that future students have a space to shape occupational therapy into the inclusive and equitable profession we envision it to be.

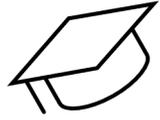
Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my family and friends, both near and far who have shown me unconditional love, support and encouragement. My wonderful 'Orphan Annies' peer network group, the definition of strong women. And finally my entire Pitt OT family, who have left an immeasurable and permanent mark on my life.

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- My biggest take away is that occupational therapy should never be put in a box and neither should I! I can achieve anything and everything if I have the heart to pursue it.





Claire Colwell, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pi Theta Epsilon Honor Society Member

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family, friends, and boyfriend for supporting me along this journey! Also, my cat Lola for being cute and distracting me from my stress.
- Thank you to the Pitt OT faculty and my fieldwork educators for their support in my academic and professional development!

What are your future plans?

- Relax!! And (hopefully) get a job working in an inpatient rehab setting.





Emily J Dempsey, OTD

Accomplishments

- Created a successful capstone project in promoting Readiness for oral feeding within the neonatal intensive care setting
- Gained experience in working within skilled nursing during the COVID-19 crisis
- Gained a professional skill set of collaboration and problem solving within the medical community and my peers

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank Dr. Chisholm, Dr. Baird, Dr. Stover, and Dr. Caldwell for aiding me in my professional development
- I would like to thank my mom for introducing me to the amazing field of Occupational Therapy

What are your future plans?

- To develop a successful and unique pediatric outpatient program in order to promote early-onset healthy lifestyles.





Nicole Saba Dolcich, OTD

Accomplishments

- International Seating Symposium Scholarship
- Pedagogy Badge
- Co-Leader of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force

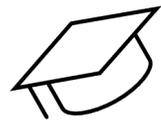
Acknowledgements

- My mother, who always believed in me & my dreams. She can't be with us today, but I know she's looking down from heaven smiling & cheering me on. My father and my brothers, for always being there for me & believing I can achieve anything. My friends, who have become my family, for always being my biggest cheerleaders & always believing in me. The department staff and professors -- the support & guidance has been unparalleled. & Finally my loving husband, Matthew, for being patient, supportive, & walking through this journey by my side. I love and thank you all for helping me to become the person I am today.

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- "Calm on the outside & chaos on the inside" - even if you have no idea what you're doing, make it look like you do!





Caroline Drake, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pi Theta Epsilon

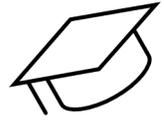
Acknowledgements

- My family, friends, and amazing Capstone group :)

What are your future plans?

- Move to a new city and start my career as a pediatric OT!





Katie Grunewald, OTD

Accomplishments

- Joan C. Rodgers Occupational Therapy Award Recipient
- Pi Theta Epsilon National Honor Society Member
- Mildred L. Wood SHRS Endowed Student Resource Award Recipient

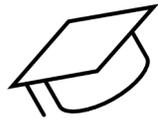
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family and boyfriend for the unconditional love and support, for cheering me on and always being a phone call away. Thank you to the Pitt OT faculty for the guidance and inspiration. And thank you to my classmates, friends, and roommates for the motivation and endless laughter that truly got me through the last three years.

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Meeting classmates who turned into lifelong friends and made Pittsburgh feel like home, who were always willing to practice occupational balance, and who will always have a place to stay when they visit me in WI :)





Dani Hall, OTD

Accomplishments

- Member of Pi Theta Epsilon Honor Society
- Recipient of the Mildred L. Wood SHRS Endowed Student Resource Award and the Out of State Funding Award
- Research Assistant in the Pediatric Research Laboratory

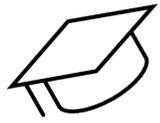
Acknowledgements

- HUGE thank you to my loved ones for being the best support system in the world! I couldn't have done it without you all.
- Thank you to the Pitt OT faculty for your continuous guidance and support!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Realizing how far we've all come since being terrified for our first performance exam semester one (COPM on the simulated patient)





Courtney Holzwarth, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pedagogy Badge
- Co-creator of F.O.R.E.S.T. Program

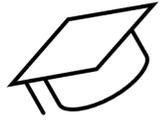
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my amazing parents, family and friends for their endless support, love and encouragement to always follow my dreams!
- Thank you to the professors and mentors for inspiring and preparing me to be the best OT possible!
- And a special thank you to my classmates that have become lifelong friends and made the past 3 years unforgettable!

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- Sometimes you need to shut up and put your hands in your pockets.





Lina Huynh, OTD

Accomplishments

- First in my family to get a higher education and obtain a doctorate degree! (that 1st gen life 🤔👉)
- Only falling down Bates hill once

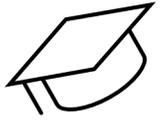
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my amazing friends and family for supporting me! And thank you to faculty for all that they've done!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- All the food options we had when classes were in Forbes Towers





Lauren Kenney, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pi Theta Epsilon National Honor Society
- OT advocacy letter published in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

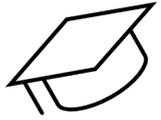
Acknowledgements

- I want to thank my family for their continuous love, support, and encouragement throughout my 7 years at Pitt. I also want to thank everyone in the Pitt OT department, my fieldwork educators, and amazing friends for helping me grow as an OT.

What are your future plans?

- After graduation, I plan to pursue a career in a pediatric setting.





Bianca Kienzle, OTD

Accomplishments

- Inducted into Pi Theta Epsilon, the National Honor Society of Occupational Therapy

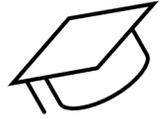
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family, friends, peers and professors who have supported me and cheered me on throughout this program!

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- The knowledge and passion I have gained from all of my Pitt OT experiences has inspired me to be a change agent and lifelong learner!





Ramya Krishna, OTD

Accomplishments

- Helped implement a community-based program to empower individuals impacted by cancer
- Getting through WISER
- Getting married during a pandemic and getting our dog Luna!

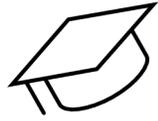
Acknowledgements

- A huge thank you to my family and friends for all of their love and support.
- Thank you to all my professors, fieldwork educators, and the amazing friends I've made along the way in this program. And a big shout out to my peer-network!

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- Remaining calm on the outside despite chaos on the inside :)





Emily Krut, OTD

Accomplishments

- Research Assistant for the Balancing Life and Chemo II Study and ADAPTS Imaging Study
- Course Assistant for Therapeutic Approaches I and Fieldwork Education A
- OT Representative for Primary Care Progress

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family and friends for their continued love, guidance, and support throughout my educational career! Thank you to my professors for challenging, inspiring, and helping me grow as an OT!

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- To remain calm on the outside, even if I am feeling chaos on the inside.





Julia Kychun, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pi Theta Epsilon
- Pennsylvania AHEC Scholars Program

Acknowledgements

- Thank you first and foremost to my parents, as well as all the educators who helped me grow over the past three years.





Sara Lessem, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pi Theta Epsilon
- Pitt OT AOTA Representative
- International Seating Symposium Scholarship Recipient

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to all who supported me throughout this journey! Thank you to my parents, brothers, grandmas, and my boyfriend - I would not have made it through without you! Thank you to the incredible Pitt OT faculty! And thank you to my Pitt OT friends... we made it!!

What are your future plans?

- Accepted 2 wonderful part-time positions: acute care at Northwestern and pursuing management at Equestrian Connection (an equine-assisted program that offers PT, OT, and mental health services)





Elissa Lichtman, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pi Theta Epsilon
- Jewish Healthcare Foundation Patient Safety Fellowship

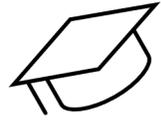
Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my parents Ken and Linda, my boyfriend Grant, and my wonderful friends for all of their support!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Participating in the Arthritis walk with the Kewl Kats, and creating the PERS with my fabulous capstone group





Sunny Lin, OTD

Accomplishments

- Jewish Healthcare Foundation Death and Dying Fellowship
- Credential in Pedagogy
- OT Educator Training Track

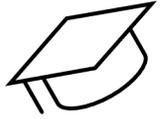
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family and friends, especially my mom and husband, for their endless love and support

What are your future plans?

- Get a job in an inpatient rehabilitation facility, wherever life takes Ming and I.





Hannah A. Linden, OTD

Accomplishments

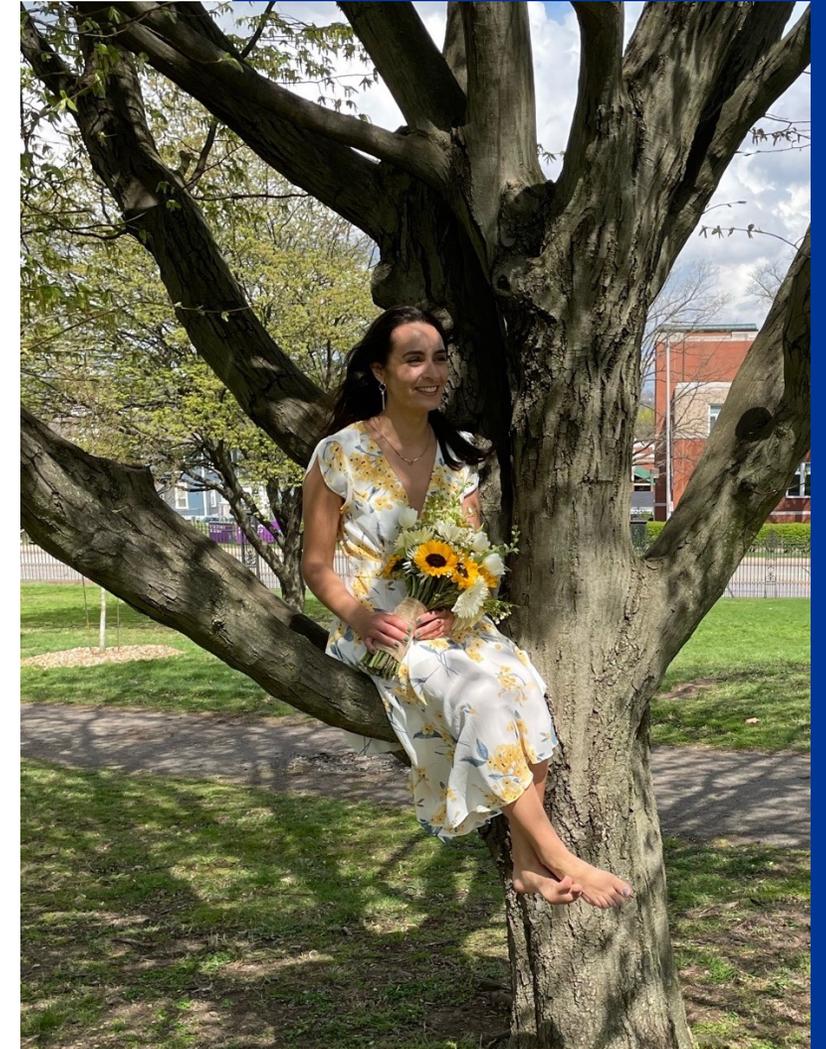
- Provided 1:1 mentoring in communication skills through the Woodlands' Mentorship Incubator Program
- Gained extensive experience in research, feeding interventions, and community health programming while working with Dr. Caldwell in the Pediatric Health Promotion Laboratory
- Got married!

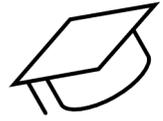
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my supportive family and to my wonderful husband Edward, who bolsters my confidence on every hard day. I appreciated getting to know each one of my colleagues in the class of 2021 and wish the best OT lives for all of you! Finally, a special thank you to the faculty and staff of the Pitt OT family who patiently and passionately shaped us into inspired, competent practitioners.

What are your future plans?

- My immediate plans are to secure employment as a pediatric occupational therapist, with long-term plans to transition to early intervention. I am interested in seeking specialized certifications in infant feeding interventions and pediatric mental health.





Tessa Marthaler, OTD

Accomplishments

- President of Pi Theta Epsilon Honors Society
- Published Occupational Therapy Advocacy Piece in Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

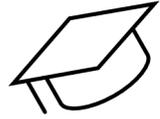
Acknowledgements

- Thanks to Juleen, my advisor, who was always so supportive and there for me when I needed her! Also thank you to Angela, who helped us navigate through our Capstone Program during COVID-19! Finally, thanks to my mom and dad who are always my biggest cheerleaders!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- White coat ceremony before going off into Level II Fieldwork!





Gabriella Mazzeo, OTD

Accomplishments

- 2020 AOTA Conference Poster Presenter
- 2020 Milestones National Autism Conference Session Presenter

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to Mom, Dad, Tom, and Ant for always being a phone call away - whether I'm in Pittsburgh, Arizona, or somewhere in between.
- Thank you to the Pediatric Health Promotion lab, my amazing Capstone group, and my friends for the support and the laughs.

What are your future plans?

- I plan to pursue my interests in pediatrics, mental health, and trauma-informed care.





Christian Meeder, OTD

Accomplishments

- Co-Creator of the F.O.R.E.S.T. program at The Woodlands Foundation
- Assisted in planning of Sensory Day at the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children
- Advocated for additional LGBTQ education and care within the Pitt OT department and helped to secure guest lecturers for future cohorts to discuss how our OT students can create a climate that supports LGBTQ diversity in the classroom, OT profession, and in patient care.

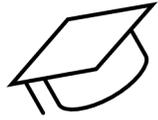
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family, friends, and professors for their constant support and encouragement through the last three years!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Meeting incredible people and future colleagues that I will forever call my friends, and all the amazing places my Fieldwork took me to.





Tori Merritt, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pi Theta Epsilon National Honors Society Member
- Research Assistant in the Pediatric Health Promotion Laboratory
- Presenter at 2020 AOTA Virtual Conference

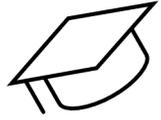
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family, friends, and roommates for always supporting and encouraging me throughout this program!
- Thank you to my classmates, professors, peer network & faculty mentors for their inspiration and helping me grow!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Getting food delivered to BSP during study sessions
- Exploring the city with my friends and roommates





Indira Mukerji, OTD

Accomplishments

- Research Assistant for Cognitive Performance Lab under Dr. Skidmore
- Co-creator of the Synced for Success Program for Provident Charter School Teachers and Staff
- Co-developer of the All-Inclusive Playground Manual and the Adaptive Controller Manual for The Children's Home of Pittsburgh and Lemieux Family Center

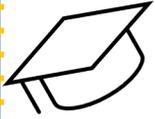
Acknowledgements

- A special thank you to my family and friends, especially my wonderful parents and sister, for their constant love and support-I couldn't have done it without you! And thank you to my peer network group for making my capstone experience such an enjoyable one!

What are your future plans?

- I plan to pursue a pediatric occupational therapist position in an outpatient or hospital setting.





Sarah Elizabeth Newborn, OTD

Accomplishments

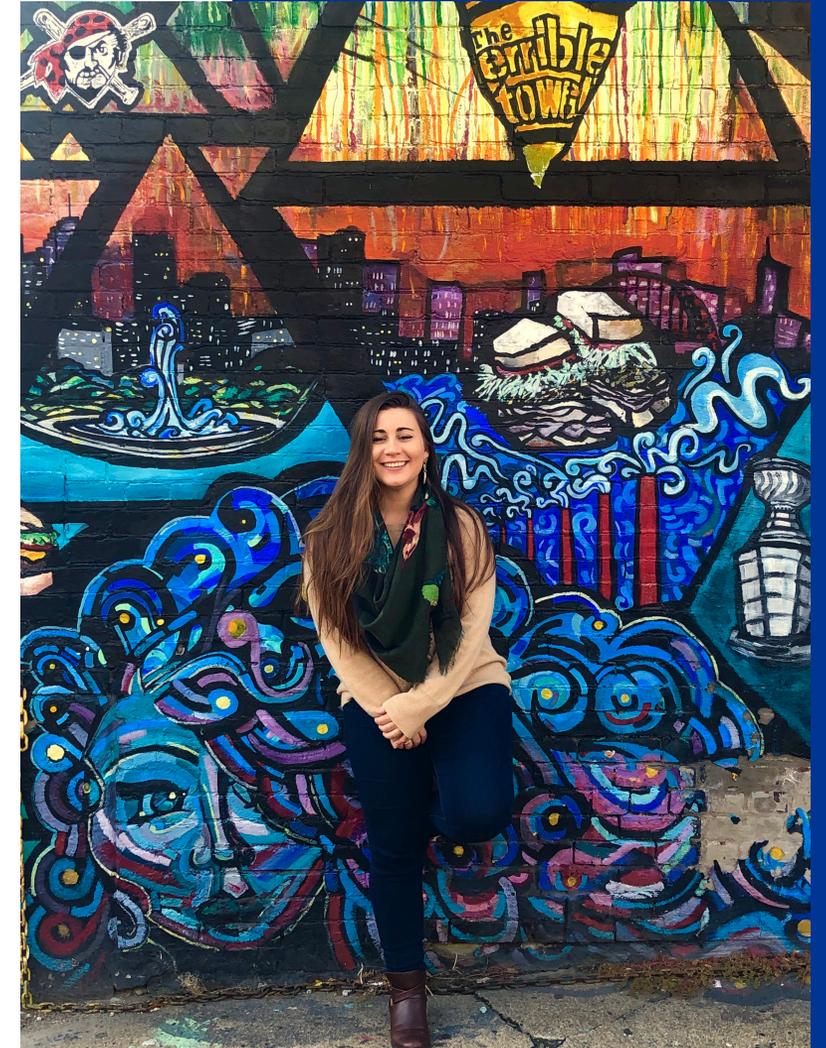
- Graduating as a Doctor of Occupational Therapy from one of the best schools in the nation!

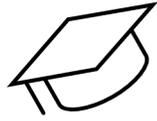
Acknowledgements

- I have had an incredible community that has poured love, support, and encouragement into me. I am thankful for my family, friends, and my church family for supporting me on this journey over the past three years.

What are your future plans?

- I will complete an internship in Athens, Greece this summer designing trauma informed programming for refugees with the non-profit organization Hard Places Community. Then I will return to the states and work as a school-based travel OT or as a nature-based pediatric clinician!





Cam Nguyen, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pi Theta Epsilon Honor Society
- Jewish Healthcare Foundation Patient Safety and Death & Dying Fellow
- Co-created an occupation-based self-management program for individuals affected by cancer

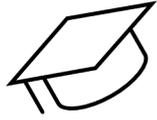
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my incredible family for their unconditional love and support.
- Thank you to my amazing friends and Pitt OT family for making the past three years so memorable!

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- Occupational therapy is unstoppable!





Claire Payne, OTD

Accomplishments

- Co-founder of annual SHRS Collaborative Care Conference
- Member of the first OT Educator Training Track and Pedagogy Badge

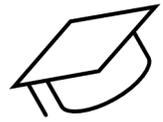
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my incredible family and friends for your continued love and support.
- Thank you to all of my Pitt OT friends, faculty, and peer network for making these past three years so memorable.

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Exploring Pittsburgh with friends and my entire capstone experience with team Abraham Winkin'!





Jessica Pentazer, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pitt OTD Student Ambassador
- Earned Pedagogy Badge
- Completed OT Educator Training Track

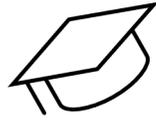
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family and boyfriend for always believing in me and supporting me throughout the last 3 years! To my classmates that quickly became best friends for life, THANK YOU! I couldn't have done it without you!

What are your future plans?

1. Take a well-deserved beach vacation!
2. Pass the NBCOT exam!
3. Pursue a career in pediatrics!





Lauren Pruyne, OTD

Accomplishments

- Making it through 17 straight semesters of college
- Pedagogy Badge and Educator Training Track
- Accepting an outpatient pediatric position!

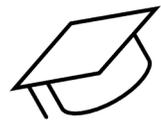
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my parents and loved ones that have supported me on this journey! I am one lucky gal!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Each moment belly laughing with my forever 'OT Pals' :)





Emily Pullman, OTD

Accomplishments

- Graduate Certificate in Gerontology
- Presenter at the 2019 POTA and 2020 AOTA Conferences
- Certified in A Matter of Balance and implemented in the community

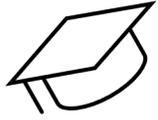
Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my Mom, Dad, and Benny for their endless support and always being only a FaceTime away, Pam for guiding and mentoring me through the geriatric world, and my amazing peer network, friends, and faculty over the past three years.

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Parking next to my car twin Alaina everyday!





Nikki Rosenbaum, OTD

Accomplishments

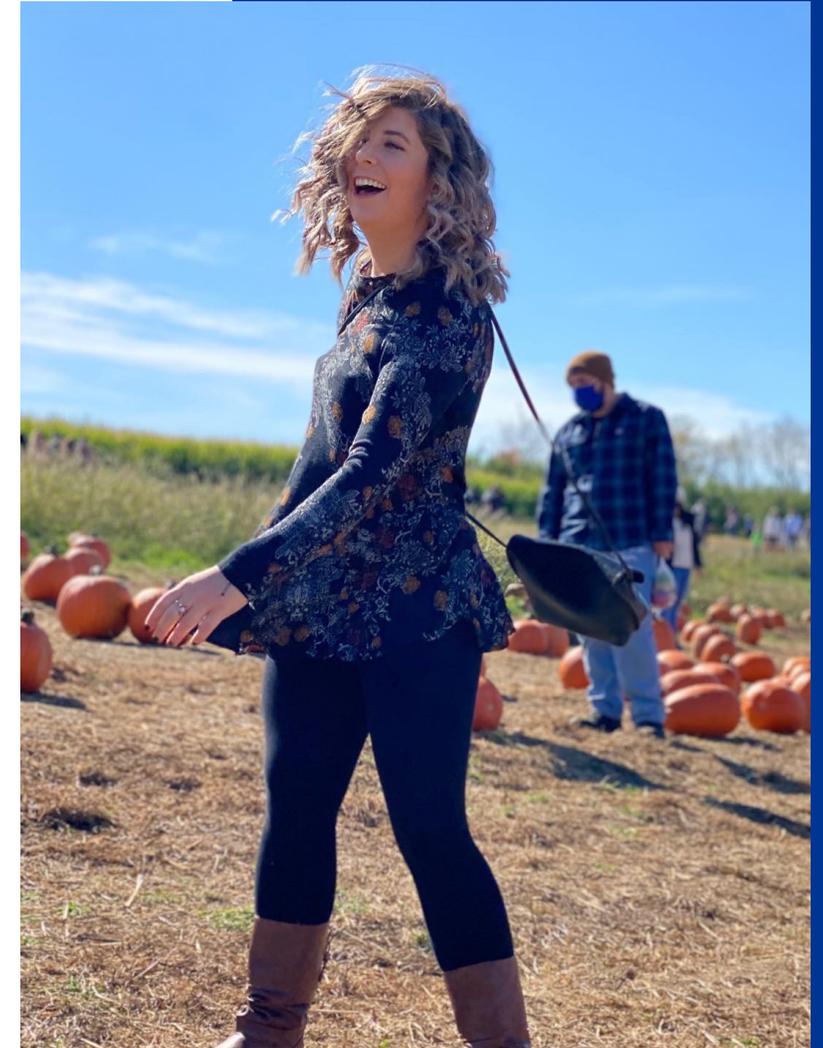
- Recipient of Anne Pascasio Merit Scholarship
- Jewish Healthcare Foundation Patient Safety Fellowship
- Served 2 years as SHRS Student Advisory Board's (SAB) Business Administrator and GPSG Assembly Board Representative

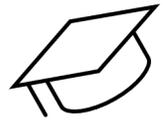
Acknowledgements

- I'm grateful for...
- All the love and support from my friends and family, especially dealing with my many breakdowns
- My professors who always answer my MILLIONS of emails (specifically Alyson and Beth), never let me give up on myself, and encourage me to take every opportunity possible
- Carly, who I know has been watching over me and my biggest cheerleader these past 3 years

What are your future plans?

- To pass-out on some beach for a few weeks before moving to Baltimore to start my Acute Care Fellowship with Johns Hopkins.





Natalie Silverman, OTD

Accomplishments

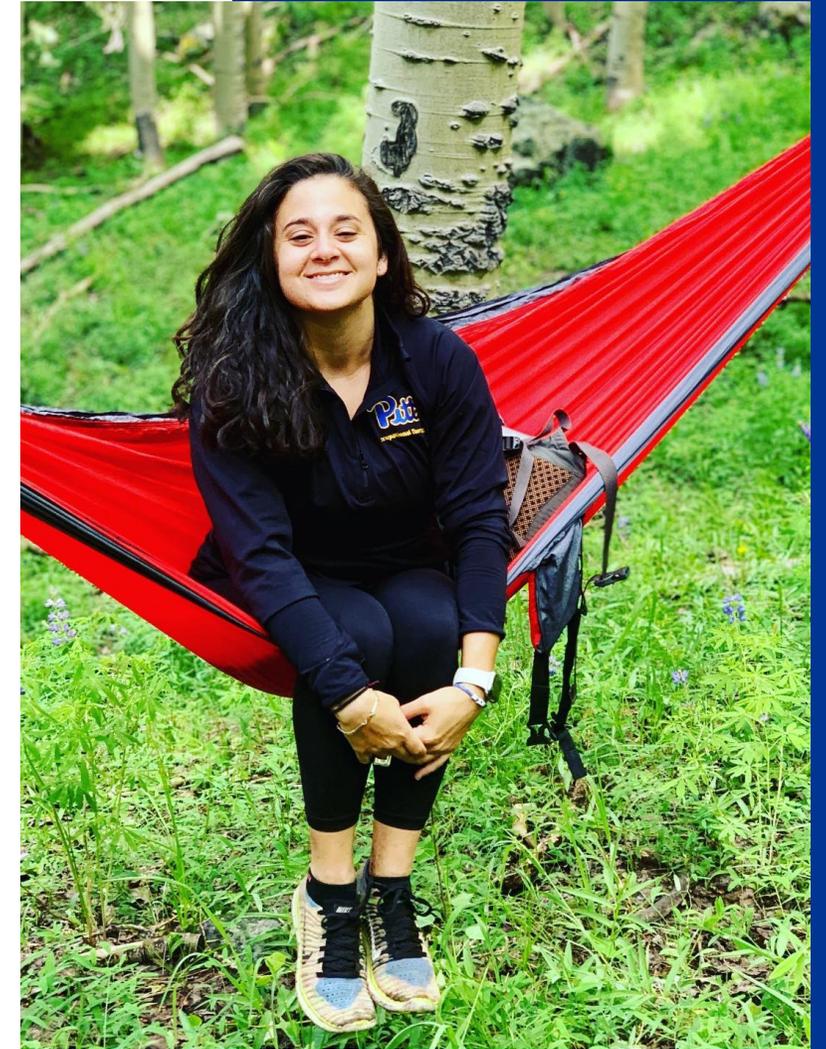
- Leaving a career to pursue a graduate education in a field I'm passionate about
- Pi Theta Epsilon National Honors Society Member
- Pediatric Research Assistant with Dr. Roxanna Bendixen and Dr. Alyson Stover

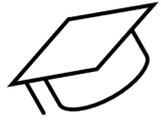
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family, friends, and faculty for their continued support throughout my graduate experience.

What are your future plans?

- I hope to stay in the Pittsburgh area and pursue a career in Pediatrics.





Rachel Bry Thomson, OTD

Accomplishments

- Earned an Achievement in Pedagogy Badge
- Implemented a Doctoral Capstone Project at UPMC's Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh with a focus on caregiver education for Acquired Brain Injuries
- Gained Level 2 fieldwork experience at the Watson Institute, a special education school, and the Veterans Hospital of Pittsburgh in the Plastic Hand Surgical department

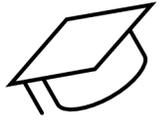
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to all of my friends and family who have supported me over the past three years. I couldn't have done it without you!

What are your future plans?

- To get a job that I love and be the best OT that I can be!





Melissa (Missy) Toth, OTD

Accomplishments

- Occupational Therapy Award of Professional Excellence
- First in my family to achieve a doctoral degree
- Co-founding the Pitt COTAD Chapter

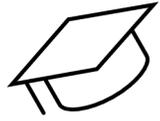
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my family for their constant support and to the friends I have made in this program for keeping me sane along the way. To the faculty and staff, thank you for sharing your passion and teaching about the profession of occupational therapy.

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- The comfy chairs in 5068 (Forbes Tower)
- Creating friendships I will never forget
- Getting to work with passionate peers through COTAD





Theresa Tran, OTD

Accomplishments

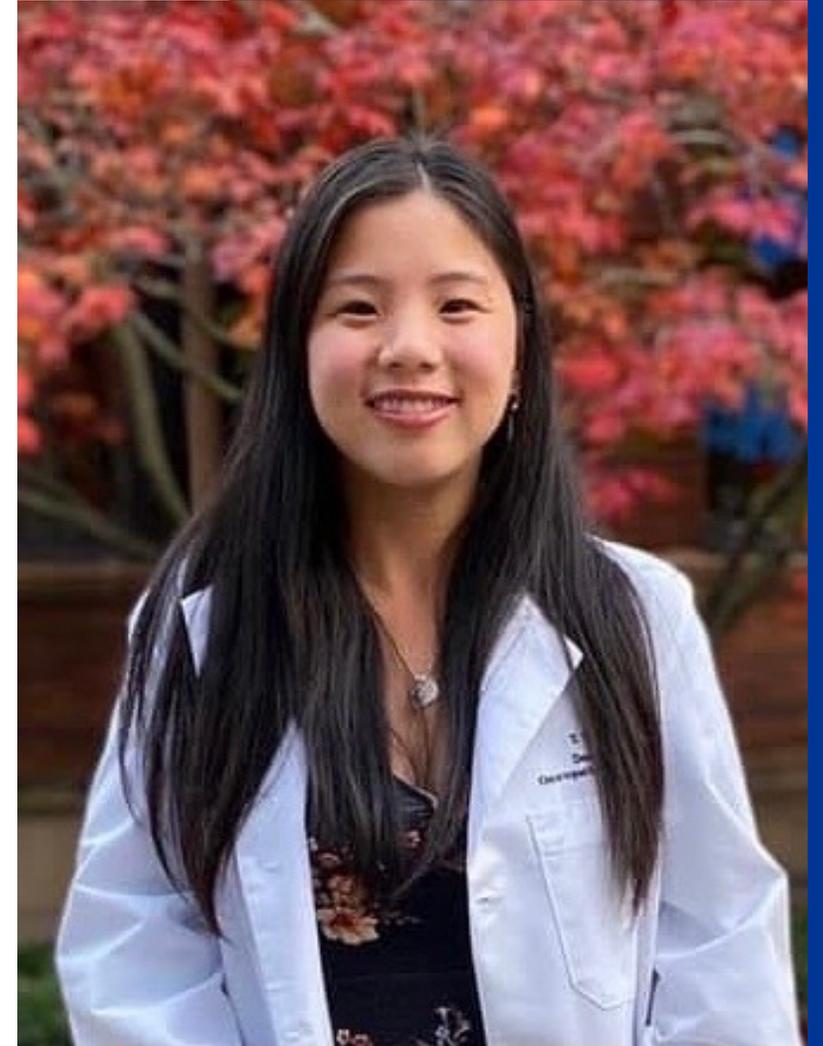
- Founding member and 3rd year chair for Pitt's COTAD Chapter

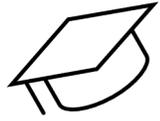
Acknowledgements

- Thanks to my friends and family for being great sources of encouragement and support over these past 3 years

What are your future plans?

- My future plans are to pass the NBCOT exam and get a job in inpatient rehab or possibly mental health





Julia Vellky, OTD

Accomplishments

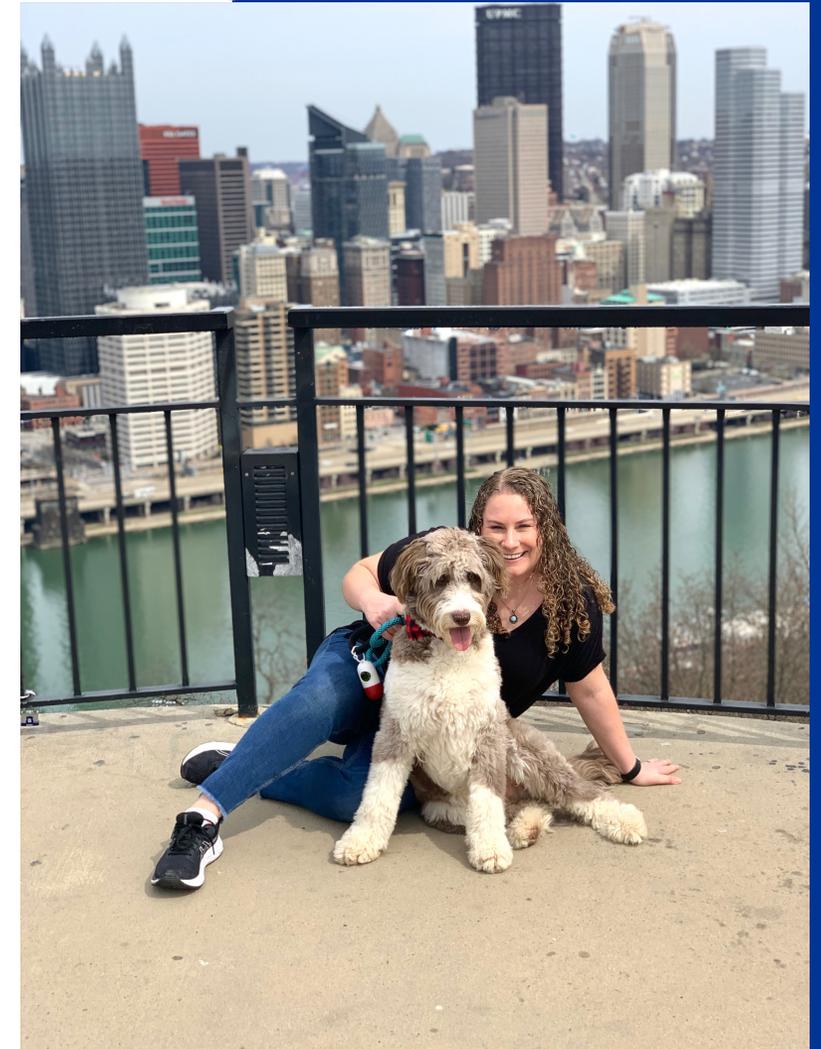
- Pi Theta Epsilon Honor Society Vice President
- Student Ambassador Coordinator
- Planned a Wedding During Grad School & Covid-19!

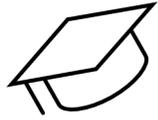
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my parents, fiancé, family, friends, classmates, & the Pitt OT Faculty for helping me drag myself through 19 consecutive years of school!
- I couldn't have achieved my dreams without you all cheering for me every step of the way!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- When I accidentally called 911 during the transfer lab because I was wearing my Apple watch even though Joanne *very clearly* said it was a bad idea... it was, indeed, a bad idea.





Leighann Warholak, OTD

Accomplishments

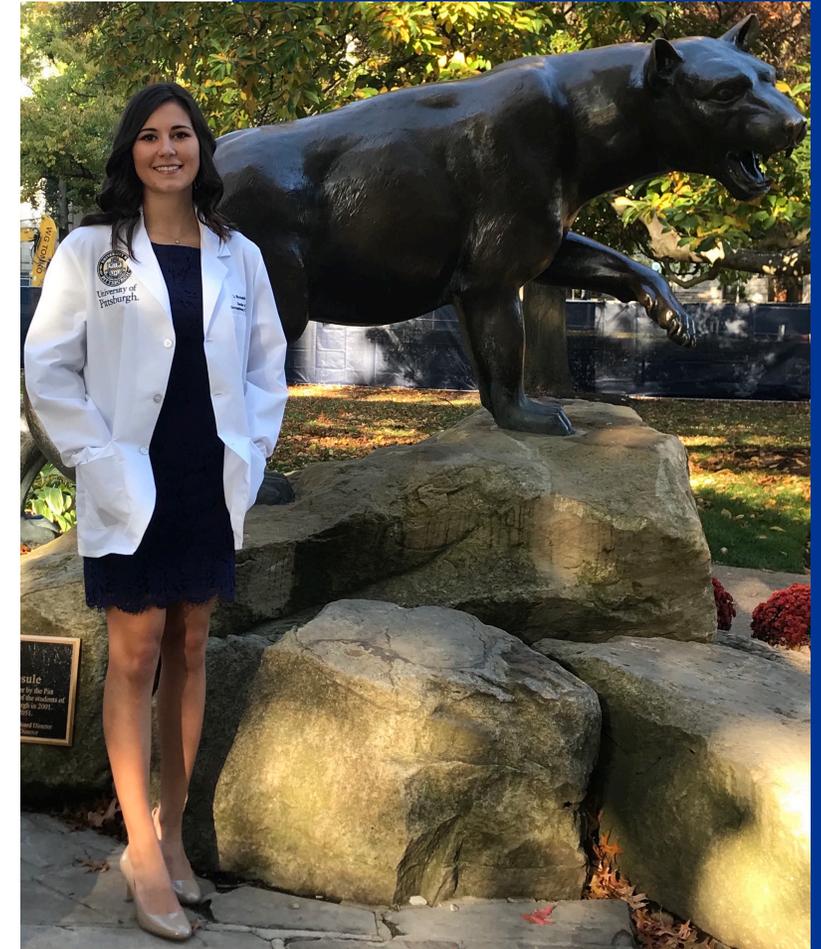
- AOTA Work & Industry SIS Student Intern
- Pi Theta Epsilon National Honors Society Secretary

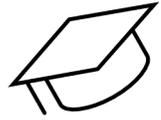
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my friends and family, especially my Mom, who have encouraged and supported me on this journey.
- Thank you to the Pitt department for a great experience. Shout out to my Pitt OT friends and my capstone peer-network for keeping me laughing and motivated!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Celebrating after finishing exams and my entire capstone experience!





Taylor Wellman, OTD

Accomplishments

- Pi Theta Epsilon
- AOTA Mental Health Special Interest Section Intern 2019-2020

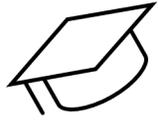
Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my family and friends for your love and support during my time in the OTD program. I would also like to acknowledge Pitt OT for your commitment to our growth as occupational therapists!

What are your future plans?

- I plan to become a pediatric/adolescent mental health occupational therapist in Pittsburgh! I also hope to one day pursue a career in academia.





Samantha Whitney, OTD

Accomplishments

- Member of Pi Theta Epsilon Honor Society
- Research Interventionist for Study of Therapeutic Exercise following Cardiac Arrest
- Achievement in Pedagogy Badge

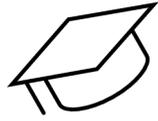
Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my parents for their endless support, my twin sister Paige for embarking on the OT journey along side me at Chatham, my wonderful Pitt OT friends who kept me going, my loving boyfriend Evan who supported me and brought me endless takeout, and my cat George, who was my #1 stress-reliever!

What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Spending time with my incredible Peer Network as we completed our Capstone Program at Western Psychiatric Hospital! Thank you for all of the laughs, conversations about life, and support through this last semester!





Alaina Wilson, OTD

Accomplishments

- Graduate Certificate in Gerontology

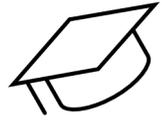
Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my parents for being there for me throughout this journey, I couldn't have done it without them! I would also like to thank my friends and boyfriend for always being there to cheer me on and supporting me!

What is your biggest takeaway from the program?

- "It depends"





Lexy Zelczak, OTD

Accomplishments

- Assisted in the development and implementation of a virtual, community-based program for adults with cancer
- Planned a wedding while in grad school

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my fiancé, Zack, for supporting me and encouraging me through school
- Thank you to my parents and sis for all their encouragement and my favorite aunt, uncle, and cousins who were my support system while here in Pittsburgh
- And shout out to the best Peer Network for making my last few semesters of grad school the best! I couldn't have done it without y'all!

What are your future plans?

- Pass the NBCOT, get married, and find a job :)





Alex Zubyk, OTD

Accomplishments

- Presented at Pitt OT Colloquium
- Peer mentor for second year students

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to my dad, siblings, niece, nephew, cats, and other family members for their endless support and encouragement. Thank you to my friends who were kind enough to save me a seat in 5068. And thank you to my mom for always watching over me.

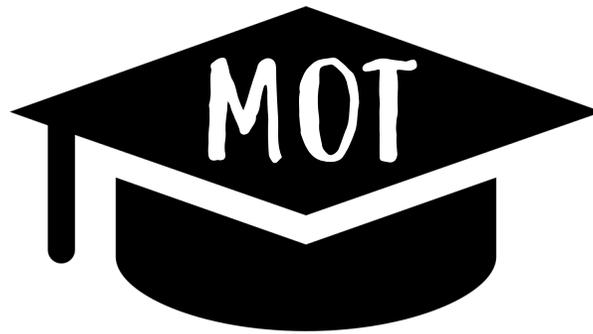
What is your favorite memory during your time in Pitt's OT program?

- Getting Condado after a tough exam!!!



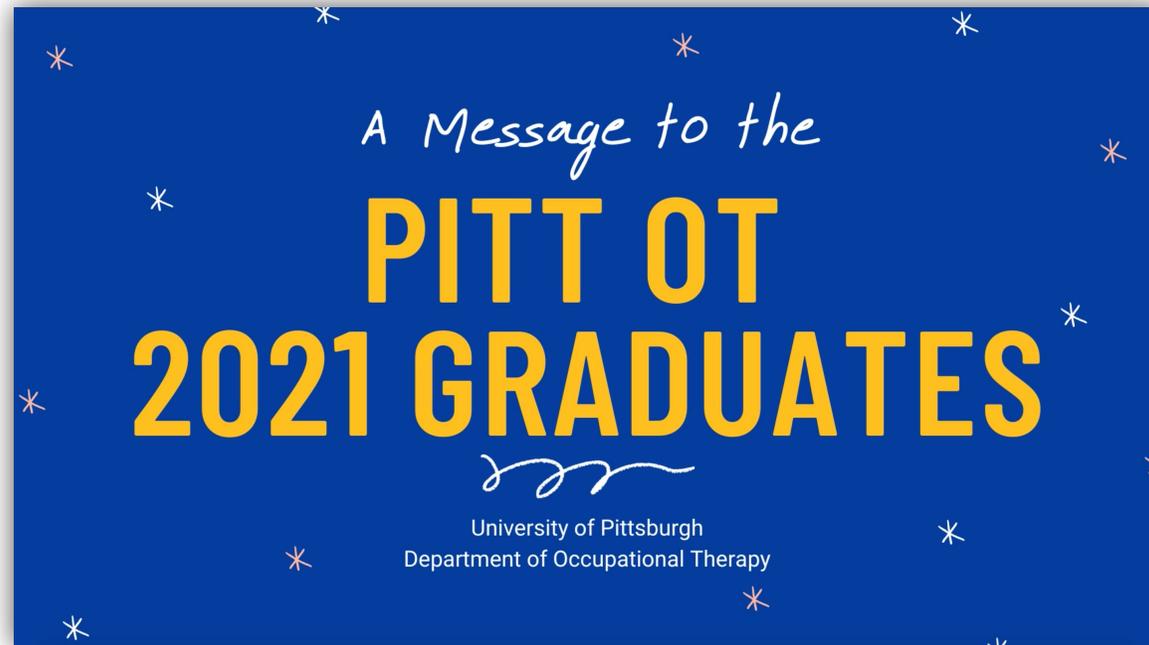
CONGRATULATIONS

Class of 2021



Faculty Farewells

Please take this time to grab a tissue and stay tuned for a few messages from those who have shaped us to be the **BEST** practitioners we can be!



Closing Remarks

Denise Chisholm

PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA

**Professor and Vice Chair for
Academic and Administrative Affairs
Director, MOT and OTD Programs
Department of Occupational Therapy**



University of
Pittsburgh

Department of Occupational Therapy
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

Thank you for celebrating with us!



With Love,
The Pitt OT
Class of 2021



University of
Pittsburgh

Department of Occupational Therapy
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences



HAIL TO PITT!