



PITT

Occupational Therapy Newslink

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

The U.S. News & World Report has recently ranked the University of Pittsburgh Occupational Therapy Program as #4 in the United States.

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Presidential Excellence



Elizabeth Skidmore, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, associate professor and chair at the University of Pittsburgh Department of Occupational Therapy recently received the US Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers.

This award is the highest honor bestowed by the United States government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research career.



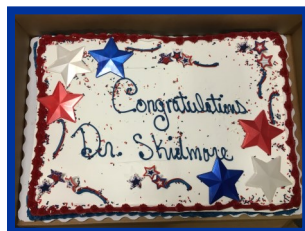
Dr. Skidmore (center and front row) receives a surprise celebration from OT students and faculty

Dr. Skidmore's research focuses on cognitive impairment and mood changes after acquired brain injury. Dr. Skidmore obtained her PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in 2003. Since that time, she has accumulated an impressive record of 55 peer-reviewed publications and 19 grants for which she served as primary investigator or co-investigator.

Dr. Skidmore was nominated for the U.S. Presidential Early Career Award on behalf of the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research, a center within the National Institutes of Health that fosters and advances interdisciplinary rehabilitation research.

The early career awards were established in 1996 to acknowledge innovative research at the frontiers of science and technology and to honor commitment to community service as demonstrated through scientific leadership, public education, or community outreach.

As the first occupational therapist to receive this award, Dr. Skidmore stands out as a member of a very select group of rehabilitation professionals ever to receive this honor.



In Memoriam: Dr. Caroline Brayley

On February 29, 2016 the University of Pittsburgh and the occupational therapy community lost an ardent supporter and dear friend.

Caroline Brayley, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA earned her Bachelor of Science degree in occupational therapy from the University of New Hampshire, her Master of Education degree from SUNY Buffalo and her Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Pittsburgh.

In 1982, she was recruited to the University of Pittsburgh to become the founding chair of the occupational therapy program. In this role, she laid the foundation for a world class program until her retirement in 1993.

In 2015, Dr. Brayley cemented her legacy to the university and the profession with the establishment of the Caroline Robinson Brayley Student Enrichment Fund. The funds are designated for student enrichment.



Dr. Brayley will be greatly missed by her friends, colleagues, and former students.

From the Chair...



Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore,
Chair, Department of
Occupational Therapy

Our view of our “self” shapes our thoughts, our actions, and our contributions. The authors of the Centennial Vision crafted the vision to re-shape our profession’s “self” view – from a “nice group of people doing good work” to a “powerful and widely recognized” profession. In the last few months I have interacted with a number of national and international leaders in practice, in research, in education, and in policy. Occupational therapy practitioners are not only among these leaders, but we are more and more influential in each of these arenas because of our distinct expertise.

In the spirit of “widely recognized,” I am pleased to announce that **the University of Pittsburgh is now ranked #4 in the U. S. News World Report** reputational rankings of occupational therapy graduate programs. Our jump in rankings is testimony that within our “powerful and widely recognized profession,” our colleagues in occupational therapy programs nationwide recognize the University of Pittsburgh as one of the top institutions for occupational therapy education, training, and research.

This recognition is meaningful, and a natural outflow of the strategic body of work that we have been accomplishing together – students, alumni, staff, and faculty in collaboration with our clinical, academic, and scientific partners. As we look to the future, we must build on what we have started, expanding the depth and breadth of our current and future work. I count it a privilege to be engaged in this important journey with each of you!

Elizabeth Skidmore

Faculty Achievements

Amit Sethi, PhD, OTR/L

received a grant from the Innovation Institute, University of Pittsburgh (through NSF-ICROS) for I-HITS, which is a system to improve hand function after stroke.

Roxanna Bendixen, PhD,

OTR/L received a grant from the Foundation to Eradicate Duchenne for her study, “Use of Microsoft Bands as an Outcome Measure in Boys with DMD – Parallel Study to Clinical Study Protocol VBPI5-003.”

Pamela Toto, PhD, OTR/L

presented an interactive lab, “Adaptive Equipment to Promote Aging in Place” to University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine students and UPMC Geriatric Medicine faculty and staff.

In her role as an AOTA Board of Director, **Denise Chisholm, PhD, OTR/L** hosted Board to Classroom sessions to OT students at Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH and Ithaca University, Ithaca, NY.

Recent Publications:

Terhorst, L, Holm, MB, Toto, PE, & Rogers, JC. (In Press). Performance-based impairment measures as predictors of early-stage activity limitations in community-dwelling older adults. *Journal of Aging and Health*.

Rodakowski, J, Reynolds III, CF, Lopez, OL, Butters, MA, Dew, MA, **Skidmore, ER.** (In Press). Developing a non-pharmacological intervention for individuals with mild cognitive impairment. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*.

AOTF Intervention Grant

Juleen Rodakowski, OTD, MS, OTR/L was awarded the Intervention Research Grant by the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF). Her study will examine caregiver and care-recipient response to an occupation-based intervention. Individuals with disabilities often rely heavily on unpaid family caregivers to help perform necessary occu-

pations. The emotional and physical demands of caregiving often contribute to caregivers experiencing burden. Caregivers with burden are at-risk for poor health and a heightened risk of mortality. This is likely, in turn, to negatively impact care-recipient quality of life. The proposed study refines an occupation-based intervention that teaches caregivers to fac-

ilitate problem solving over the course of daily activities. The long-term goal for this project is to establish an effective rehabilitation intervention that promotes caregiver health and well-being, which ultimately influences care-recipient health.



Student Spotlight: Emily Kringle

For PhD student **Emily Kringle, MOT, OTR/L**, the path to success all began in Cokato, Minnesota - a one spotlight town with plenty of cornfields. After graduating from the University of North Dakota (UND) in 2010, Emily practiced for five years in inpatient rehabilitation before deciding to pursue a career in research.

While an MOT student, Emily was the Pi Theta Epsilon (PTE) President of her local PTE chapter (Kappa Chapter). With encourage-

ment from her mentor at UND, Dr. Sonia Zimmerman, she went on to serve as the National PTE Vice President and then President. During her tenure as National PTE President, Emily had the opportunity to sit on the Board of Trustees for the American Occupational Therapy Foundation. This experience exposed her to the importance of establishing a program of research to support occupational therapy practice. Emily decided to pursue her PhD at Pitt because of the strong research programs and

high quality mentorship in the OT department. Her research interests include neurorehabilitation, engagement in rehabilitation programs, and diverse populations. Emily describes Pitt as "a fantastic place to grow as an OT scientist!"

In recognition of her efforts, Emily was honored at the American Occupational Therapy Association annual conference with the AOTF Meritorious Service Award. Congratulations to Emily!



Dr. Sonia Zimmerman and Emily (R)

Students Making News

Kristen Kowalski (MOT '17), received the Stanley Prostedrednik Health Sciences Scholarship. Kristen will be working with an occupational therapist in Auckland, New Zealand in an Inclusion Support Centre for children with physical and cognitive disabilities.

Robert Evans (MOT, '17) was selected as a fellow for The QIT Health Innovators Fellowship of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation.

MOT students **Kristen Bianco, Samantha Chamberlin, Seraf-**

ina Congeni, Brianna Garcia, Kasey Gehlhaus, Alexandra Gruner, Madeline Iannamorelli, Amy Katz, Catherine Leece, Stephanie Lewis, Leah McCarthy, Steven Paciga, Elise Pure, Kaitlyn Rankin, Jordan Shoup, Hannah Simko, Amelia Szabat, Lauren White, and Cameron Williams were inducted into the Beta Tau Chapter of Pi Theta Epsilon, the national honor society for occupational therapy students, on February 24, 2016.

Brianna Garcia (MOT '17) received the Procter & Gamble HSF Scholarship.

1st year MOT students **Leah McCarthy, Kristen Kowalski, Kasey Gehlhaus, Annah Greaber, Sarah Arndt, Alyssa Dezulovich, Jess Ellenberger, Lauren White, Hannah Pugh** designed and implemented a program at four local YMCAs for the United Way Be My Neighbor Day on March 19, 2016. Students taught children and their families how to "be a good neighbor" to persons with disabilities.



Pitt MOT students Luree Miller, Jamie Crisman, Jessica Ellenberger, Brianna Garcia and Garrett Bowers put their super sensory powers on display at the Heroiks Superstroll

Alumni Spotlight: Lauren Rizio

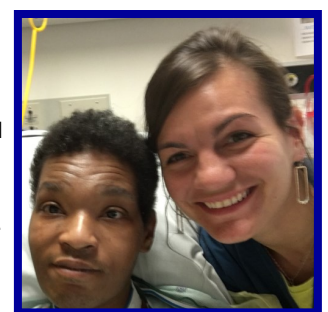
Lauren Rizio, MOT, OTR/L ('15) hails as the first Pitt OT graduate to participate in the AOTA Residency program. Lauren pursued a residency opportunity because she wanted more specialized and advanced training as a way of enhancing her clinical reasoning and practice.

Lauren is currently at the University of Chicago Medical Center. She chose this site because of its broad range of specialty services and the therapy department's early mobility program in ICUs. Her favorite part of the residency is the fact that residents rotate through 8 different services (orthopedics, cardiothoracic

ICU, medical intensive care ICU, burn unit, general medicine, general surgery, neurology, and oncology). Lauren appreciates the exposure and training with a diverse, medically complex population. She also enjoys the weekly "specialty practice" - during which they have opportunities to work with various health care providers. Lauren has observed open heart surgery, plastic surgery, and participated in an outpatient cardiac clinic. She feels these experiences have opened her eyes to what patients experience throughout their continuum of care.

Lauren reports that the curriculum at Pitt prepared her well for this experience. In particular, she notes her training in client-centered care and occupation-based practice as being paramount to her success.

As for the future, Lauren's plans are undecided but likely include staying in the Windy City that has quickly become her "home".



Lauren Rizio (R) with a client.

Thank You For Your Support

The University of Pittsburgh Department of Occupational Therapy would like to thank all those who have generously donated to our programs in 2015

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Laura F. Waterstram
Katherine Wyko

University of Pittsburgh Department of Occupational Therapy
5012 Forbes Tower
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
Phone: 412-383-6620
Email: OTPitt@shrs.pitt.edu Web: <http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/OT/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PittOccupationalTherapy>

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A “Sense-ational” Event at the Warhol

MOT students Jessica Ellenberger, Robert Evans, Brianna Garcia, Lurie Miller, Hannah Pecyna and Megan Shaffer (MOT '17), along with faculty representatives Dr. Roxanna Bendixen and Ms. Angela Caldwell, recently participated in a sensory-friendly program at the Andy Warhol Museum. This event was designed specifically for teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorders and sensory sensitivities. Students played an essential role in the needs assessment, development, and implementation of this sensory-friendly event, and gave of their time, energy and enthusiasm.

MOT students, in collaboration with the museum staff, provided special accommodations during this event such as adaptations of learning activities, development of quiet areas, and



Pitt student, Pitt faculty, Chatham students and program coordinator, Leah Morelli, at the Warhol

resources and suggestions for sensory regulation. Each MOT student was paired with a teen or young adult, along with his or her family caregiver, to actively engage and explore Andy Warhol's artwork. Activities

included gallery experiences and discussions focused on identifying emotions based on facial expressions and creating art through dance. Participants also had the opportunity to express themselves artistically through crafting an acetate collage and silkscreen print. Ms. Leah Morelli, Program Coordinator, and other Warhol staff expressed that the learning objectives were not only met, but that the experiential learning activities exceeded their expectations. The feedback from the families was extremely positive. This community partnership, which included MOT students from Chatham University, will continue through additional museum events planned for the remainder of the year. The provision of valuable occupational therapy expertise to enhance museum experiences fosters leadership in the students by allowing them to apply their knowledge of sensory processing and autism spectrum disorders while gaining invaluable experience advocating for accessibility in the arts.