

INTRODUCTION TO THE Carlow OT PROGRAM

Carlow University was founded by the Sisters of Mercy and guided by the Mercy Values: mercy, sacredness of creation, hospitality, discovery, and service. This is the work of the common good and guides the OT program to support students as adult learners to become powerful citizens of justice in society and healthcare. Small classes and individualized attention to student learning and diversity are integrated to develop the whole person for innovative practice in healthcare. A whole health perspective is taught throughout the OT curriculum and shared with campus and community agencies. Carlow OT prepares students with intentional integration of interprofessional (IP) learning experiences into both course- and community-based learning opportunities. Shared spaces and faculty create daily IP interactions, while critical thinking and ethics courses provide IP discussion and reflection. In order to create a fair and balanced society, we must advance toward “an occupationally-just world by enabling the empowerment and social inclusion of populations who routinely experience social exclusion” (Nilsson & Townsend, 2010, p. 57).

Mission

The Carlow University Program in Occupational Therapy offers an interprofessional, transformative educational opportunity to a diverse, socially responsive community of learners in order to prepare them as ethical, innovative leaders in healthcare, dedicated to optimizing health and wellbeing as a path to occupational justice.

Vision

The Program in Occupational Therapy will be recognized for educating innovative, ethical occupational therapists with a focus on health and wellbeing as a path to occupational justice and a bridge to transform healthcare delivery to meet the diverse needs of all people, communities, and populations.

Philosophy of Education

The program’s philosophy reflects the beliefs held by the Occupational Therapy Program at Carlow University regarding occupational therapy, human beings and an understanding of how human beings learn.

Foundations of Occupational Therapy Practice

The OT Program at Carlow University follows the American Occupational Therapy Association’s philosophy of the profession and philosophy of occupational therapy education (AOTA, 2017; 2018). The program believes that students are occupational beings and occupation is a right and necessity for all people. “All individuals have an innate need and right to engage in meaningful occupations throughout their lives. Participation in these occupations influences their development, health, and well-being across the lifespan. Thus, participation in meaningful occupations is a determinant of health and leads to adaptation” (AOTA, 2017, p. 1). Occupation, as a social determinant of health, is facilitated through the just promotion of health and wellbeing for all people, communities, and populations.

Foundational Views of Humanity

The OT faculty believe that people are capable of growth and development when they have access to a foundation of health and well-being. Health enables engagement in occupation and meaningful occupation provides the basis for health and satisfying human needs (AOTA, 2017). Occupational engagement and justice are developed and enhanced by addressing the needs of the “whole person” and attending to the mind, body, and spirit within a social and cultural context. Students are seen as

adult learners with a diverse body of gifts, talents, and lived experiences. Students are viewed as balanced, occupational beings, with self-care and health management as priority occupations in the building of knowledge and professional identity in their occupational therapy educational experience.

Humanism Theory

Humanistic education principles “are well suited to educate students about unsustainable human lifestyles and its consequences to human health and well-being as the principles are premised on the idea of respect for human rights, including the right for learners to express their own opinions and values” (Huss et al., 2020, p. 1098). Our educational philosophy begins with an understanding that all people, including our students, must have access to a foundation of health and well-being as a precursor to occupational engagement (Baum & Christiansen, 2005). In occupational therapy, wellbeing is defined as the satisfaction with participation in occupations and daily activities that enhance quality of life (QoL) (AOTA, 2020). This means that students must engage in a balance of occupations, including self-care, as depicted in Maslow’s hierarchy and Humanism Theory of Learning, on their path of learning and fulfillment.

Transformational Learning

The Transformational Learning Theory is focused on changing the way learners think about the world around them, and in the process, changing the way they think about themselves (Taylor, 2007). Our program desires to develop socially conscious citizens and healthcare professionals. As students learn about occupation and occupational justice, they begin to see themselves and the world through a new lens. Learners use critical thinking to reflect on experiences and to understand the past and prepare for future action.

In conclusion, our educational philosophy is consistent with AOTA’s Philosophical Base of Occupational Therapy Education which states, “Occupational therapy educators use active learning that engages the learner in a collaborative process that builds on prior knowledge and experiences and integrates professional academic knowledge, experiential learning, clinical reasoning, and self-reflection” (AOTA, 2018, p. 1). The overall curriculum developmental sequence, beginning with self-care, utilizes experiential learning and critical thinking and builds upon previous knowledge in order to create connections that will bridge the way to new understanding of self, the world, and the art and science of occupation. The concept of occupational justice and promoting equity in health and well-being for optimal occupational engagement drives the meaning and intention of all of the educational initiatives in the MSOT/OTD programs at Carlow University.

OT Program Goals:

1. Provide a quality educational experience in order to recruit and develop socially conscious learners who are competent, ethical, and sensitive health professionals.
2. Cultivate an innovative, learner-centered curriculum which promotes interprofessional (IP) practice, occupational justice, health and well-being, and the development of critical thinking and evidence-based clinical practices.
3. Promote and develop collaborative learning which fosters an atmosphere of dedication to occupational justice to benefit the university, student body, and local community.
4. Enhance the financial stability of the program to support the successful achievement of the mission of the university and the OT Department.

Program Student Learning Outcomes:

Our educational goals describe what our MSOT students will demonstrate upon completion of their learning experiences. The goals flow from and support the mission statement and the curricular design, threads, and sequence are the vehicles used to ensure the achievement of these goals.

VALUES	THEME/Threads	MSOT
MERCY	<i>Occupational Justice</i>	MSOT SLO 1. Promote and advocate for occupational justice and the power of occupational engagement for individuals and communities to prevent illness and disability, increase meaningful participation, and maintain health.
SACREDNESS OF CREATION	<i>Health and Wellbeing</i>	MSOT SLO 2. Convey respect and sensitivity for the sacredness of creation and the belief that all human beings have a right to reach their maximal potential through self-care and engagement in healthy living occupations.
HOSPITALITY	<i>Professional Identity</i>	MSOT SLO 3: Demonstrate a strong professional identity through an understanding of theoretical knowledge base that is foundational to the practice of occupational therapy and demonstrate competence in entry-level skills of contextual assessment, occupation-based treatment planning and intervention, documentation and team collaboration.
HOSPITALITY	<i>IP Practice</i>	MSOT SLO 4: Demonstrate the standard of interprofessional collaborations through critical thinking, ethical integrity, accountability to outcomes, and successful partnerships.
DISCOVERY	<i>Evidence based Practice</i> <i>Innovation and Technology</i>	MSOT SLO 5: Demonstrate use of critical thinking to find new pathways to overcoming barriers to occupational engagement using evidence-based reasoning strategies and tools to adapt, modify, and respond to the current and future occupational needs of individuals, communities, and populations.
SERVICE	<i>Environment and Community</i>	MSOT SLO 6: Demonstrate service to the community with respect for diversity, a commitment to equity, and a focus on inclusion, to develop a culture of health and occupational justice for all people, communities, and populations.

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