

Occupational Therapy Assistant Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program at Arkansas Tech University-Ozark Campus is in accordance with the mission statement of the university. The mission statement of Arkansas Tech University states that their main purpose is to provide a solid educational foundation for life-long learning to a diverse community of learners. The purpose of the Arkansas Tech-Ozark OTA program is to prepare the student for entry into the health care environment with the required skills needed to perform the duties of an occupational therapy assistant. The OTA program will prepare professionals to perform occupational therapy services under the supervision of an occupational therapist. The goal of the program is to provide entry-level OTAs with the theoretical and clinical knowledge necessary to excel in today's dynamic healthcare environment. The coursework will educate the student in the importance of individual occupation as it relates to independence, health, safety and culture across a lifespan and in the variety of settings possible for the practice of occupational therapy. The program is designed to produce ethical, competent, creative and productive occupational therapy assistants who are dedicated to the continued improvement of the community, the profession and of themselves.

Occupational Therapy Assistant Program Philosophy

The philosophy of the OTA program is also congruent with AOTA's philosophical statement that "man is an active being whose development is influenced by the use of purposeful activity." The OTA program at Arkansas Tech holds that human beings are dynamic and ever changing throughout the life span. Occupation can be defined by age, gender, culture, environment, socioeconomics and geographics. Illness, accidents or disability can interrupt the process of human development that generally defines the occupation of life.

According to the philosophical base of occupational therapy, "Occupational therapy is based on the belief that purposeful activity (occupation), including its interpersonal and environmental components, may be used to prevent and mediate dysfunction and to elicit maximum adaptation." The role of the occupational therapy assistant, under this philosophy, is to assist individuals who have experienced a disruption in their life, to adapt and overcome these interruptions in human development. The job of Arkansas Tech's occupational therapy assistant program is to educate students to be able to identify "occupation" for each client and use sound, evidence based practice to assist that client in adaptation to their situation. The core belief of this philosophy is that human beings are each unique and each has a relationship with the world that is individual to that person. The role of occupational therapy then becomes to maximize an individual's performance with meaningful, desired activities. Such activities may include:

- Returning to home management skills;
- Improving self-care skills;
- Returning to job;
- Returning to parenting and family life;
- Improving of school performance;
- Regaining movement, memory or social skills after an accident;
- Improving independent living.

The philosophical base of occupational therapy as a profession states that human beings adapt to their circumstances as a function of intrinsic motivation. The philosophy that the human is an active being whose purpose is defined by activity also applies to the OTA **student** in this program. Because the Arkansas Tech-Ozark campus consists of many non-traditional adult learners, the basic tenants of Malcolm Knowles' adult learning theory were used to design the OTA curriculum. Knowles asserts that "adults enter into a learning experience with a need to know why they should be learning something." Keeping this in mind, the OTA program was designed to interrelate so that each class uses the whole-part-whole learning model. Adult learners, according to Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998), respond best to having foundational material presented (whole), then experiential learning (part) followed by the opportunity to link the foundational and experiential (the second whole). Adult learners also need to have educational experiences linked to real-life job or career experiences (Knowles, 1996). This is why the OTA program will have off-site lab experiences as well as two Level I and two Level II fieldwork experiences. Multiple lab classes on and off site will also help the adult learner participate in the hands-on experience he needs.

The educational process at Arkansas Tech-Ozark for the OTA program begins with the learning of required competencies in the core curriculum. Once a student is accepted into the OTA program, the curriculum builds on those core competencies and becomes more specialized and specific to the discipline of occupational therapy. The OTA student will learn foundational concepts that will be built upon during specialized classes and labs designed to prepare the learner for an ever changing health care world. All practice areas in occupational therapy will be available to students as they experience lab settings at the university and in the community. The final 16 weeks of the educational process consists of full time fieldwork experiences in community settings where the foundational and clinical knowledge learned in the classroom is applied in a practice setting.

The philosophy of the OTA program at Arkansas Tech-Ozark is congruent with the mission statement of Arkansas Tech University whose main purpose is to provide a solid educational foundation for life-long learning to a diverse community of learners. This philosophy and mission is congruent with AOTA's philosophy of occupational-therapy education which states that occupational therapy education must "reinforce the development of new knowledge supporting the use of occupation, the application of clinical reasoning based on evidence, the

necessity for lifelong learning and the improvement of professional knowledge and skills.” The OTA program at Arkansas Tech also shares these tenants that the objective of the educational process for the OTA is to work in a diverse world, apply skills based on knowledge and embrace the desire to be a life-long learner.

Adult learners, according to Knowles (1996), are motivated to learn by intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Because the end product of the educational process is employment, the OTA educational process will strive to demonstrate to the learner how the concepts in the classroom will directly relate to a future job. The OTA is assumed to be as dynamic and adaptive as the population they serve. Because of this belief, the goal for the OTA student in this program will intrinsic motivation to assume the role of life-long learner by seeking learning, teaching and research opportunities that will lead to the betterment of the profession and the community.

References:

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