

THE communiqué

Illinois Occupational Therapy Association

In This Issue

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Understanding the Entry-Level OTD Capstone Components

As service delivery systems and policies continue to change, more occupational therapy educational programs are transitioning from offering entry-level master's degrees to entry-level doctoral (OTD) degrees. While both master's level and OTD programs prepare students to become generalist practitioners, OTD programs also prepare students to gain and apply advanced knowledge beyond what is expected for entry level practice. One major aspect of the OTD curriculum that is not required of a master's level program is the doctoral capstone. The doctoral capstone consists of two components, the Doctoral Capstone Experience (DCE) and the Capstone Project. As of February 2019, there are 29 fully accredited OTD programs across the United States, with another 34 developing programs and 73 applicant programs (American Occupational Therapy Association, n.d.).

Two Illinois programs, Midwestern University and Rush University, were the first in the state to transition to OTD curricula. Both programs matriculated their first OTD cohorts in 2017, are currently considered developing programs, and are expecting full accreditation in 2020. Midwestern University refers to the DCE as the "Doctoral Internship," while Rush University has maintained the term of DCE. Students in the first OTD cohorts from both universities will be completing their DCEs and Capstone

Projects in January-April 2020. The purpose of this article is to provide ILOTA members with more information about the capstone components, explain how the DCE is different from traditional fieldwork rotations, and describe how ILOTA members can support OTD students in completing their DCEs and Capstone Projects.



Purpose and Examples of the DCE and Capstone Project

The DCE is a 14- or 16-week "full-time in-depth exposure in a concentrated area that may include on-site and off-site activities that meets developed goals/objectives of the doctoral capstone" (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education [ACOTE], 2018, p. 47). Students may choose to focus on one or more of the following areas: practice skills, research skills, administration, leadership, program and policy development, advocacy, education, or theory (ACOTE, 2018). The Capstone Project is a "project that

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is completed by a doctoral-level student that demonstrates the student's ability to relate theory to practice and to synthesize in-depth knowledge in a practice area that relates to the capstone experience" (ACOTE, 2018, p. 47). The Capstone Project is related to the experience and helps to inform the kinds of activities in which the student might engage during the DCE. It does not, however, constitute all the activities of the DCE.

Both Midwestern and Rush Universities anticipate that many of their students' DCEs and Capstone Projects will be related to program development or program enhancement. These experiences could occur in traditional settings where OT services are already offered or in emerging settings where no OT is available but participants served by the organization could benefit from programs designed to meet

their occupational needs. Examples of this type of experience would be to develop support group and educational programs for cancer survivors and their caregivers in a hospital setting or to develop a life skills program at a homeless shelter. DCEs and Capstone Projects could also focus on advocacy, such as advocating for OT services within a setting where OT is not currently offered or advocating on behalf of individuals who could benefit from OT services. Table 1 shares some examples of capstone settings, projects, and DCE activities.

Differences Between Fieldwork and the DCE

Fieldwork and the DCE are required clinical education opportunities for students that occur after completion of didactic coursework in an entry-level OTD program. It is important to identify how these experiences are different

Table 1
Doctoral Capstone Examples

Setting	Capstone Project	Doctoral Capstone Experience
Clinical in outpatient cancer treatment center	Development of a clinical pathway for best practice in lymphedema treatment using L-Dex data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training in lymphedema techniques - Manage a small caseload of lymphedema patients - Complete data collection and analysis - Develop portfolio to meet lymphedema certification requirements
Community TBI clubhouse	Development of an online training model on employment and investigation of the impact on gainful employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with the university video department for training in creating online videos - Film an interview with a client related to the "episode" - Implement an intervention to address work skills - Develop an outcome measure for assessing skills related to the module - Develop a marketing campaign describing the education program and recruiting - Meet with potential employers to describe the program and develop partnerships for the Clubhouse
Academia	Development of academic coursework addressing the use of 3D printing within intervention and activity analysis classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend a webinar/course on the use of 3D printers - Shadow medical engineering department use of 3D printing - Collaborate with the prosthetics department where they use 3D printing - Deliver a lecture presentation in OT class
Mayor's office on disability	Development of a training program for hospitality industry staff to advocate for access and inclusion for people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete an environmental assessment of physical access for local hotels - Work on projects within the Mayor's office to support disability access - Plan for hospitality industry conference on disability - Develop a training manual on providing services and access to people with disabilities within the hospitality industry

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to guarantee understanding amongst clinical educators and mentors so that expectations, roles, and responsibilities are clear for each. Important differences include the expectations of performance, level and type of supervision, length of the clinical experience, and the requirements for on- and off-site attendance. One difference between Midwestern and Rush Universities is the length of the experience. The new standards adopted in August 2018 and set to go into effect in July 2020 indicate that the length of the DCE will change from 16 to 14 weeks (ACOTE, 2018). Programs may elect early adoption of the D.1.5 ACOTE standard. Midwestern University is maintaining the 16-week length for the DCE for their first cohort and Rush University has chosen early adoption of the 14-week length for the DCE.

Another important distinction between fieldwork and the DCE is the use of mentors as opposed to supervisors. Mentoring is defined as “a relationship between two people in which one person (the mentor) is dedicated to the personal and professional growth of the other (the mentee)” (ACOTE, p. 38). Students are believed to have entry-level skills as a result of completing all fieldwork requirements,

therefore a mentoring approach – one of guidance, coaching, and collaboration, rather than direct supervision – is used as another means to transition the student to the role of professional and leader in practice. Students have both a faculty mentor and site mentor with expertise in the area of focus. Other significant differences between fieldwork and the DCE are described in Table 2.

Summary

Changes in occupational therapy education, with shifts to the entry-level OTD, present changes in clinical education. The DCE and Capstone Project offer benefits to students as well as clinical and community settings. Students have an opportunity to gain advanced practice skills and become emerging leaders in professional practice. Clinical settings and community organizations benefit from the student’s knowledge of contemporary evidence, time and enthusiasm to develop or evaluate programming or interventions for which settings never seem to have enough time, and continued professional development through dissemination of capstone deliverables through publication or presentations.

Table 2
Differences between Fieldwork and the Doctoral Capstone Experience

Characteristic	Level II Fieldwork	Doctoral Experience
ACOTE Goals	“Entry-level generalist”	“Advanced skills” beyond generalist level
Administrator	Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC)	Doctoral Capstone Coordinator/Director of Capstone Development
Supervisor & Credential	Fieldwork Educator-OTR/L	Site Mentor- may or may not be an OT. “Expertise” in area of focus
Time	12 weeks full time (480 hours)	Current ACOTE: 16 wks. (640 hrs.) New ACOTE: 14 wks. (560 hours)
Productivity	Gradual caseload build-up with typical full-time equivalent by end	May or may not bill for services depending on site and type of experience
Location	100% of time on site	At least 80% on site
Duties	Provide direct or indirect services to client	Provide direct or indirect services to client, organization, or populations.
Learning Objectives	Site develops (with input from AFWC & student)	Individualized & student developed (with input from site and faculty mentor)
Evaluation	Fieldwork Performance Evaluation	Individualized evaluation (based on program specific goals and student goals)
Placements	AFWC with student input	Student with capstone coordinator, site, and faculty mentor

Adapted from Cleary & Kemp, 2018

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Our Illinois entry-level OTD academic programs are eager to advance practice through these capstone components.

If you are interested in mentoring an OTD student for their DCE and Capstone Project, please contact the capstone coordinators at Midwestern University or Rush University:

- Paula Costello, OTD, OTR/L, Rush University
Doctoral Capstone Coordinator: 312-942-4713;
Paula_J_Costello@rush.edu
- Anne Kiraly-Alvarez, OTD, OTR/L, SCSS, Midwestern University
Director of Capstone Development: 630-515-7340; akiral@midwestern.edu

References

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About the Authors

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Volunteers Needed

ILOTA is looking for some wonderful people who want to help and assist at conference; which will be in Tinley Park October 4-5, 2019. Sometimes we are unsure of how we can help ILOTA or who we can talk to and see what is available. Listed below are some examples to demonstrate how you can help ILOTA's conference be more of a success. The following is open to all OT/OTA practitioners and students.

- Room Monitors: Give out participation stickers and take headcount of participants in specific rooms.
- Registration Table: Help check people in at conference and hand out goodies upon arrival.
- Fundraising Table: Sell raffle tickets for PAC scholarship fund for future scholars.
- Stuffing Name tags and bags prior to opening day.

ILOTA also needs Proposal Reviewers once the call for papers closes, and this opportunity is open to all practitioners.

- Proposal Reviews: review conference proposals submitted to determine acceptance at conference. Reviewers are based on clinical skill set. For example, someone with adult background will review adult based proposals as compared to school based proposals.

To put your name on a list, please email ilotaconference@gmail.com and Abi Swidergal, COTA/L will contact you.

Meet the Board: Lauren Henderson MS, OTR/L

Hi ILOTA members! My name is Lauren Henderson, and I was recently elected to serve as the ILOTA Director of Communications. After grad school, I was looking for new ways to become involved in the profession on the state level, so I chose to run for this position after a year of being a member of the Newsletter Committee. I had the wonderful opportunity to seek out articles from accomplished clinicians, researchers, and faculty, as well as edit and even write a few pieces for the *Communique* myself. I also have experience managing communications as the AOTA Assembly of Student Delegates OT Vice Chair, so I am looking forward using what that experience taught me as we look to make ILOTA's communication platforms more relevant and user-friendly. Since graduating in August, I have enjoyed establishing a routine and creating occupational balance in my life by working full time in inpatient rehab and per diem in acute care, doing endurance sports with athletes with disabilities for leisure, and now volunteering with ILOTA!



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