A Message from the Director

Welcome to the inaugural newsletter for The Center for Occupational Therapy Education (COTE)! The Center was founded three years ago at Colorado State University to promote excellence in teaching effectiveness, curriculum design, and educational research in occupational therapy. By promoting integrative, subject-centered graduate education, COTE seeks to impact the development of a critical mass of occupational therapy professionals who connect with clients, collaborate with interdisciplinary partners, create knowledge, use evidence, and forge paths to satisfactory engagement in daily life for those they serve.

To enact this mission the Center has undertaken several research and faculty development initiatives. I’d like to take the opportunity here to update you about the Center’s projects. To learn more about COTE, please visit our website at www.cote.cahs.colostate.edu. You may also contact us via email (cote@cahs.colostate.edu) to share your comments, questions and contributions. Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter.

OT Faculty Development Opportunity

COTE is pleased to announce its 4th annual Summer Teaching & Learning Institute, Designing Graduate Courses for Integrative Learning: Theory, Research, Implementation, & Assessment. Participants who attend June 22-25, 2011 will:

- Explore integrative learning in relation to the Centennial Vision and Blueprint for Entry Level Education.
- Identify the influence of integrative learning in occupational therapy educational scholarship, current course designs, and teaching practices.
- Relate integrative learning to teaching occupation- and client-centered care, evidenced-based practice, and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Understand the views of knowledge inherent in integrative learning and the congruence with views of knowledge in occupational therapy.
- Relate integrative learning to other commonly used educational constructs, such as adult, constructivist, situated, collaborative, experiential learning, and Bloom’s taxonomy.
- Use integrative learning to evaluate and (re)design a course:
  - Make integrative aims explicit in course materials.
  - Increase the range of activities used in the classroom that engage students in integrative learning.
  - Create assessment strategies to evaluate the degree to which students demonstrate integrative thinking.
  - Understand the views of knowledge inherent in integrative learning.

Conference attendees will participate in plenary sessions to review scholarship on integrative learning and its translation to occupational therapy. Following each plenary session, participants work in peer mentor groups applying educational scholarship to their own course materials and teaching strategies. There will also be opportunity for individual reflection on personal beliefs about knowledge and teaching. To take advantage of this innovative faculty development opportunity, visit our website to register and reserve your spot today!
**Integrative Learning Study**

Professional practice requires graduates to make connections between: knowledge and skills, personal beliefs and professional actions, clients’ needs and the core service of the profession, contextual factors and practice decisions, one’s own and other’s viewpoints, and between theory, research and practice, to name a few (1,2). Professionals adept at making such connections have in place the foundations for providing service that is client-centered, evidence-based and collaborative, which are markers of “best practice” among health and social care providers (3,4). Integrative learning is one means by which students can acquire the ability to make such connections (5). *Integrative learning* refers to educational activities that require students to make connections between “seemingly disparate information and draw upon a wide range of knowledge to make decisions,” resulting in students’ ability to transfer skills and knowledge learned in one context to situations encountered in different contexts (6).

Given the importance of integrative learning to the quality of service provided to clients, it is vital to identify and promote the classroom practices that engender such learning. However, no empirical data from actual integrative teaching practices have been collected in occupational therapy. Many professional curricula may not name and frame their educational approach as integrative learning but nevertheless design courses, assignments, and learning activities that require students to make the connections noted above. Therefore, professional curricula provide rich cases for studying the concept and practice of integration. COTE is conducting a pilot study that explores teaching and learning processes in occupational therapy that either implicitly or explicitly support integrative learning. The study questions include: What classroom actions reflect and support integrative learning? What areas of knowledge and experiences are students being asked to connect? What instructional processes are used to help students make connections across various domains? What course structures and technologies are in use supporting integrative learning? This pilot study will establish a research methodology that can be used to explicate the nature of integration as it is enacted in classroom practices.

Reference:

**Announcements**

- Mark your calendars! The Annual Summer Teaching & Learning Institute dates have been set for June 22–25, 2011. Online registration is now open at www.cote.cahs.colostate.edu.
- Visit our updated website for resources related to COTES’s Conceptual Framework for OT Education.
- Join us on Facebook! Connect, Collaborate, Network, and Share Education Stories and Quandaries as they relate to excellence in teaching effectiveness, curriculum design, and educational research leading to therapists who enhance the well-being of all people by maximizing participation in everyday activities.

**Studying Occupation in Occupational Therapy Education**

Creative conversations between leaders in the Society for the Study of Occupation (SSO) and The American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF) led to a unique research partnership between the two organizations focusing on how occupation is addressed in OT and OTA programs. COTE is pleased to join them in this endeavor. The research team has designed an enterprise, multi-phase, mixed methods study that is now entering the pilot project phase. Stay tuned to learn more about this exciting study as it progresses!

**Mapping Review of Occupational Therapy Education over the Last Decade**

A current baseline of knowledge about educational scholarship and research in occupational therapy has not been established. COTE is collaborating with OT colleagues to conduct a mapping review of the international occupational therapy education literature. The question guiding the review is intentionally broad: What is the nature of research and scholarship in academic education in occupational therapy over the last ten years? The findings will contribute to a baseline understanding about what has been the focus of occupational therapy research, scholarship, and education since the field moved to a post-baccalaureate degree as the entry into the profession. Partial findings will be presented at the AOTA conference in Philadelphia. Publications of the study are targeted for 2012.