



SUNY Downstate Occupational Therapy Program SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER



GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Dear students, staff, and alumni,

Welcome to another edition of our Occupational Therapy Program Newsletter! We have had a strong and exciting start to 2024 at Downstate and we are excited to share all of the wonderful accomplishments with our OT community.



Best wishes to the class of 2023 as they have completed their Level II field work and begun their professional journeys. We are excited to see where their career leads them! We encourage all of our alumni to continue to share their achievements with us.

The fall included a number of fun events hosted by SOTA and COTAD, where first and second years learned and developed a network with one another. Upcoming events include guest speakers as well as graduation ceremonies for the class of 2024! Thank you for continuing to support our OT community and we look forward to sharing more outstanding achievements in our next newsletter.

Sincerely,
Efekona Nuwere, Ed.D, OTR/L
Program Chair and Assistant Professor

Follow us on Instagram:

[@cotad.ch SUNYdownstate](#) & [@sota_downstate](#)

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Holiday Potluck:

To celebrate the various holidays that the end of the year brings, COTAD hosted its 2023 cultural holiday party on Wednesday, November 29th. Complete with cultural dishes from Haiti, Egypt, Pakistan, and sweets to get everyone in the holiday spirit, our COTAD leaders provided information about Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Christmas while relating the discussion back to occupational therapy and the importance of cultural competency and lifelong learning.



NBCOT Review Course:

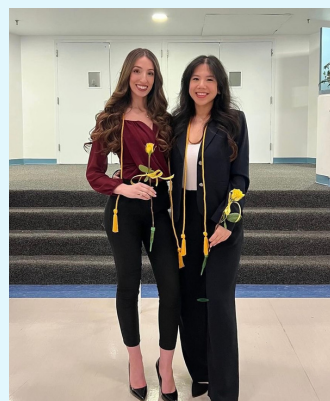
On Saturday, January 28th and Sunday, January 29th, the occupational therapy program held its annual review course intended to prepare students for the occupational therapy licensing exam by emphasizing prominent content areas and exam domains. Students were armed with practice questions and answers, study strategies, and test-taking tips during this intensive course led by many of our beloved and dedicated faculty members.

Interprofessional Healthcare Event:

First year occupational therapy students were invited to the Interprofessional Healthcare Event on January 31st to hear from representatives from different professions within the School of Health Professions as well as to share our passion for occupational therapy with other students. Joined by members of the diagnostic medical imaging, health informatics, midwifery, physical therapy, and physician assistant programs, students gathered to educate each other about the beauty of each profession in transforming the lives of patients through high quality health care.

International Service Learning Workshop:

On Tuesday, February 6th, occupational therapy students were invited to join the international service learning workshop hosted by SOTA to learn more about the upcoming opportunity for select SUNY Downstate occupational therapy students to visit Belize in order to help serve the needs of its underserved communities. Here, students were given advice regarding travel precautions and were also given tips for improving cultural competency and reasoning skills if given this opportunity to extend their clinical impact overseas.



Pi Theta Epsilon:

The induction of occupational therapy students selected to join the Alpha Kappa Chapter of Pi Theta Epsilon occurred on Monday, February 12th. Here, 13 of the second year occupational therapy students were honored for their academic achievements and their unwavering motivation while pursuing their degree.



Valentine's Day:

On Tuesday, February 13th, our students came together over pizza and sweets to socialize and celebrate Valentine's Day. Using

the opportunity to spread some love by writing letters to the residents of Selfhelp, SOTA made sure that our students brightened the lives of others through all of our shared love: occupational therapy!

Lunar New Year Celebration:

Downstate's Chapter of COTAD made Tuesday, February 13th extra special by sharing Lunar New Year Celebrations with students of the School of Health Professions and providing insightful information for us to continue to enhance our cultural competency.



ALUMNI RECOGNITION:

SIHAM BENNIS, M.S., OTR/L, CFPS

Siham Bennis, a proud 2021 graduate from the Occupational Therapy program at SUNY Downstate, has rapidly made her mark as a Certified Fall Prevention Specialist at Downstate's Special Treatment and Research (STAR) clinic. She spearheads a dynamic fall prevention initiative, driven by a profound passion for the subject that extends beyond her clinical role; she has showcased her insights



through international presentations. Beyond her clinical expertise, Siham is deeply invested in advocacy and enhancing the reach of Occupational Therapy. She actively partners with community organizations to introduce the profession to young students in underserved areas, aspiring to open doors for them just as they were opened for her.

Siham's journey has been greatly inspired by the exceptional clinicians and educators she encountered at Downstate. The mentorship and opportunities she received were not only instrumental in her education but also ignited her desire to give back to the community and the field. She credits the nurturing environment at Downstate for empowering her with the skills and confidence to pursue her ambitions and make a tangible difference in the lives of others.

Congratulations to Siham for her exemplary accomplishments and well-deserved recognition!

STUDENT FEATURES

SAMAR ISSA, OTS



What did you enjoy most about your fieldwork experiences in occupational therapy?

During my Level 1 FW experience at a nursing home, I had the opportunity to learn a lot. It was a challenging environment at times because not every situation had a clear-cut solution. I had to think critically and apply what I had learned in class to each client that I encountered. One of the biggest challenges was figuring out the best approach for clients who did not fit into predefined categories. My clinical instructor was incredibly supportive and knowledgeable. She constantly asked thought-provoking questions to help me understand the reasoning behind our interventions. Initially, I wasn't always confident in my answers, but she encouraged me to trust my judgement and provided valuable feedback. She emphasized the importance of considering the needs of each client and maintaining a client-centered approach. My FW experience was incredibly rewarding, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow in a supportive environment.

What are you looking forward to in Level II fieldwork?

I learned a lot from my first level of FW and am now ready to take on Level 2. I plan to use everything I've learned so far and will get help and guidance from my professors and future clinical instructors. They will help me understand more and guide me through the next steps. This is a chance for me to get better at what I do by applying what I know. I am looking to refine and expand the practical skills I have started to develop in Level 1, applying them in more diverse settings. I am looking forward to deliver care that is centered around the needs, preferences and values of my clients.

SAGDA RAMADAN, OTS



What did you enjoy most about your fieldwork experiences in occupational therapy?

Reflecting on my fieldwork experiences in occupational therapy, the most fulfilling aspect has undoubtedly been witnessing the incredible resilience of patients as they harness their strengths and thrive. My first fieldwork experience placement at Independence Care System (ICS), holds a special place in my heart. One story, in particular, stands out and serves as a constant reminder of why I chose this career path. I had the privilege of meeting a former ICS member who had transitioned to a staff role; once a student dancer at The Juilliard School, his life took an unexpected turn following a motor vehicle accident that resulted in a spinal cord injury, leaving him paralyzed from the chest down. His story is a testament to the power of perseverance; despite his challenges, he has flourished as a Mental Health Counselor, Disability Justice advocate, and professor at Yale—holding two master's degrees. I learned about the significant role Occupational therapy had on his journey, and was reminded of the critical role of advocacy and disability justice in Occupational Therapy which inspired me to join the e-board of Downstate's COTAD Chapter. Inspired by the resilience and achievements of those I've met, I am more motivated than ever to contribute to the field and support individuals in realizing their potential.

What are you looking forward to in Level II fieldwork?

As I look forward to my Level II fieldwork experiences, I'm excited about the opportunity to further develop my clinical skills. Reflecting on my fieldwork experience at the outpatient hand therapy setting at SPEAR, I've seen significant growth in my ability to adapt treatment plans to meet individual patient needs. Witnessing the application of diagnoses we've learned in our didactic classes in real-life situations felt like solving pieces to the puzzle, while also reinforcing the importance of clinical thinking and flexibility in treatment planning. While I had the experience of observing and taking lead on group therapy sessions, I'm now eager to engage even more directly hands-on with patients and continue learning from experienced clinicians. Overall, I'm excited to continue growing, as a future Occupational Therapist and making a positive impact on patients' lives.

ALUMNI CORNER

As Downstate OT continues to grow and evolve, we are always reminded of the incredible spirit during your times here as a student. Your professional achievements and contributions in the community and the profession are a source of pride for us all. We're currently thinking of ways we could rekindle our ties with you, celebrate our shared history, and support our alumni in their personal and professional journeys. We believe that your insights and experiences would be invaluable in shaping these endeavors.



Please scan to build our alumni community!

Graduated between 2012 and 2022?

We're looking for class representatives to help connect us with your fellow classmates.

Email for details: efekona.nuwere@downstate.edu

Class representatives:

Esther Milina, Class of 2019

Ryan Doherty, Class of 2021

Jane Sato, Class of 2023

Save the Date!

April 19th	White Coat Ceremony
May 2nd	SOHP Research Day
May 14th	SOHP Convocation
May 15th	Commencement

WHITE COAT CEREMONY & MASTER'S PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

On Friday, April 19th, the second-year cohort will be honored at the White Coat Ceremony to celebrate the completion of coursework and the beginning of their level II fieldwork experiences. Students will be joined by faculty, family, and friends in this milestone achievement and don their white coats as a symbol of professionalism and commitment to equitable and client-centered care. Additionally, student groups will present their Master's Projects (faculty-led research) showcasing their collaborative contributions to scholarship at Downstate and to the OT field.

Congratulations to the Class of 2024 and best wishes as you all embark on this next chapter!



Donate to the White Coat Ceremony

Your support will help us recognize this hardworking and talented cohort of occupational therapy students.

To make your gift online, scan below, and select 9294-Occupational Therapy Program Fund from the drop-down menu.

Donation Contribution Circles:

White Coat Ceremony - starting at \$3,000

Reception - starting at \$1,000

Media - starting at \$500

Give a White Coat - \$50

Give to the OT Program Scholarship Fund- starting at \$30

