

NEWS LETTER

SUNY Downstate Occupational Therapy Program



GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

RECENT EVENTS

Dear students, faculty, staff, and alumni of SUNY Downstate,

As we move forward into another exciting semester, I want to take a moment to celebrate the energy, dedication, and achievements that continue to shape our Occupational Therapy program here at Downstate. Our students have embraced valuable learning experiences, from hands-on fieldwork to thought-provoking discussions at conferences and community events. Faculty members have been actively engaged in research and advocacy, further strengthening our program's impact.

Congratulations to the Class of 2024 as they begin their careers and contribute their knowledge and skills to our community and beyond. We are thrilled to celebrate the Class of 2025 this spring in their academic achievements at graduation. They will embark on their Level II journeys this summer that will no doubt be enriching and rewarding. We are also excited to see the Class of 2026 continue to grow and develop as they complete their first year of the program.

As we look ahead to upcoming opportunities for learning and networking, I invite all of you to stay connected and engaged with our growing OT community. We are truly grateful for your continued support and dedication.

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



Multicultural Holiday Potluck:

To close out the fall semester, SOTA and COTAD hosted a festive intercohort gathering to celebrate diverse traditions in our community. Students and faculty engaged in an educational presentation, learning about cultural holidays and related occupations. Students across cohorts connected in a meaningful, shared experience tasting traditional foods and making crafts.



RECENT EVENTS

CHECK OUT OUR OT MERCH!

SUNY Downstate Disability Awareness Conference:

On January 23, SUNY Downstate hosted a Disability Awareness Conference that aimed to enhance awareness of disability, recognizing its prevalence and the need for improved understanding among healthcare providers. The conference featured two panels, one highlighting disability-related initiatives at Downstate and another discussing contemporary perspectives with insights from self-advocates, family members, and nationally recognized experts.



NBCOT Review Course

Also in January, the OT program hosted its annual review course to help students prepare for the NBCOT licensing exam. Faculty members guided students through practice questions, test-taking strategies, and essential review materials.

Pi Theta Epsilon Induction Ceremony:

On February 10th, 17 students in the Class of 2025 were recognized for their outstanding academic achievements and commitment to excellence. Faculty, classmates, family, and friends gathered to witness the induction of these latest members of the Alpha Kappa chapter of Pi Theta Epsilon, the national honor society for occupational therapy.



Merch Special for AOTA Conference!!

Discounted prices below

Hoodies: \$25

T-shirts: \$15



Wondering how to place an order?



Click or scan here to place your order!
or email:

efekona.nuwere@downstate.edu

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS



Lisa Raymon-Tolan, OTD, OTR/L
Class of 2008

Lisa Raymon-Tolan is a Clinical Assistant Professor at NYU's Department of Occupational Therapy and works clinically at an elementary school in Brooklyn. She has focused her career on school-based OT, including work in a sensory gym with early intervention and preschool-aged children.

Alumni Advice!

"OTs are great at looking at details and individuals, but I encourage students and new practitioners to also think bigger -- what are the systemic barriers to people engaging in their valued occupations?"

After earning her post-professional doctorate in 2016, she joined NYU in 2023, following two years at Pace University. Lisa has recently begun publishing her research and presenting on topics like social media and podcast content creation for OT students at national conferences.

Zahava Friedman, Ph.D., OT, BCBA
Class of 2006

We are proud to highlight Zahava Friedman, who is currently serving as an Assistant Professor at Kean University in Union, NJ. In addition to her teaching role, Zahava is collaborating with an interprofessional group of students to run Raising Families, a 12-week family support program designed to assist young families. Recently, she received a significant grant from The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey to support the program's efforts in assisting young families.

Dr. Friedman pictured to the right with the Raising Families Interprofessional team at Kean University.



Sara Scott, OTR/L

Class of 2005



Sara Scott, currently oversees OT doctorate students, guiding them through fieldwork placements, teaching, and advising. After starting her career in pediatrics and working with the NYC DOE, she transitioned to teaching and became a fieldwork coordinator at Yeshiva University. Although she didn't initially plan to teach, Sara discovered a passion for academia and now finds great fulfillment in

Alumni Advice!

"This is the time to really take advantage of the learning and the growth that is provided to you. You have amazing faculty and teachers, who are cheering you on to becoming the best OTs possible. I recommend that you really take advantage of this now, allow your professors to guide you in achieving your academic and professional goals, and you will look back and appreciate what you have gained."

helping her students to achieve their goals. She completed a certificate in EI under Dr. Beth Elenko, and she is proud to be in a leadership role that allows her to give back to the profession.

MEET THE PP-OTD SPRING ADMITS



Darcy Dubuisson, MS, OTR/L
Dominican University Graduate

Worked for the NYE DOE for 10 years as a paraprofessional and just completed her first year as a school-based pediatric OT for the DOE.



Sunha Park, MS, OTR/L
Yonsei University Graduate

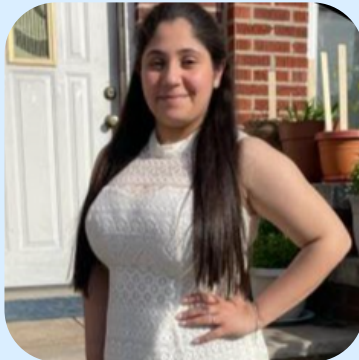
Engaged in research and hospital-based OT rehab for 3 years after earning her OT degree in S. Korea and developing a strong passion for evidence-based patient care.



Rose Nowack, MS, OTR/L
Touro College Graduate

Served as a school-based OT for the NYC DOE since 2005 and gained experience supervising COTAs which led her to consider a future in teaching as an OT.

Pascale Saad, MS, OTR/L
SUNY Downstate
University Graduate



Served as an OT in a pre-school for children with special needs, a pediatric sensory gym, and acute care hospital-based OT. Currently, she works in a Brooklyn hospital doing inpatient, outpatient, and acute care therapy.



Michelle Corn, MS, OTR/L
SUNY Downstate
University Graduate

After working as a special ed teacher and BCBA, she graduated OT school and worked in acute care, adult outpatient, as well as pediatrics in her current role in an outpatient setting doing early intervention.

We asked our students:

What do you see as the primary benefits of the PP-OTD for your career?



...prepare for a future in teaching OT...

...refine my clinical reasoning...

...strengthen research skills...

...collaborate with experienced professionals...

...give me an upper hand...

...engage in policy advocacy...

...prepare for leadership roles...

...advance leadership and advocacy skills...

...broaden my global perspective...



ALUMNI CORNER & UPCOMING EVENTS

As SUNY Downstate's Occupational Therapy Program continues to grow and evolve, we strive to offer meaningful ways to keep our alumni community involved and strengthen our network.

Please email efekona.nuwere@downstate.edu if you are interested in any of the opportunities below and **follow us on Instagram** to stay up to date on updates and events within the department!

GET INVOLVED:

→ Meet us at AOTA Inspire: Join us at SUNY Downstate's Reception during the AOTA Annual Conference and Expo in Philadelphia, PA on Thursday, April 3rd from 6 to 8pm at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown lobby. Email us to RSVP. We hope to see you there!

→ Become a Class Representative: Did you graduate from the MS-OT program between the years 2012 and 2022? We're looking for class representatives to help connect us with your classmates. Join the following class representatives to maintain leadership for your cohort!

Class representatives:

Esther Milina, Class of 2019
Ryan Doherty, Class of 2021
Jane Sato, Class of 2023

→ Join the Advisory Board: Contribute as a member of our Advisory Board to impact the education of future practitioners, expand your professional network, stay informed about the programs, and engage with the occupational therapy community, all while enhancing your own personal and professional growth.

→ Donate to OT Program Scholarship Fund: Your generosity, no matter the amount, will help us support our hardworking and talented students by financially supporting their academic journeys and professional involvement in the field! To make your gift online, scan below and choose **9294-Occupational Therapy Program Fund** from the drop-down menu.

Click or Scan
Here to Donate:



Save the Date!

Mar 18

**SOTA/NPASS Guest Lecture
on Neonatal Therapy
SOHP Career & Networking
Event (6-8pm)**



APRIL IS OT MONTH!
Stay tuned for our OT
Tabling- Dates TBA



Apr 3-5

AOTA Annual Conference

↳ Philadelphia, PA

Apr 27

Walk MS with SOTA

May 2

**Class of 2025
White Coat Ceremony**

May 19

SOHP Convocation

May 20

Class of 2025 Graduation

Follow us on Instagram!

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