



SUNY Downstate Occupational Therapy Program FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Hello students, staff, and alumni; we hope you all had a great summer! We are thrilled to bring you the latest edition of our Occupational Therapy Program Newsletter, highlighting the exciting activities and achievements of our dedicated students and staff throughout the past few months.

A heartfelt welcome is extended to all members of the class of 2025 as they begin their journeys as OT students, and we sincerely congratulate the class of 2023 for finishing classes in May. This summer was filled with collaboration and engagement, from inspiring guest speakers and student-led activities to community outreach initiatives. We take great pride in sharing the following stories of excellence in order to provide a glimpse into our program's commitment to fostering innovation and meaningful social participation. We thank you all for your continued support and look forward to many more exciting events in the near future.

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

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

3-D Printing Workshop

On Saturday, June 17th, Loreto Dumitrescu and Chris Marrota hosted a presentation and workshop focused on how 3D printing technology can be used to produce assistive devices for patients which cost less than

traditional devices. Students were shown examples of such devices and how 3D print designs can be made using a specialized computer software.

Juneteenth Celebration

Students came together to share about the significance of Juneteenth and the historical context that surrounded the abolishment of slavery. By educating fellow students on the profound importance of this holiday, they gained insight into how this pivotal event has influenced the evolution of our nation. This celebration served as a valuable step in fostering cultural competency, enhancing our ability to deliver client-centered care as future practitioners.



Eid Al-Adha Celebration

The OT students and staff spent the afternoon of Thursday, July 6th embracing the cultural traditions which characterize this important Muslim holiday. This event not only allowed the OT community to celebrate diversity but also promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of Islamic faith and traditions.



Follow us on



Accessible and Adaptive Yoga

On July 11th, guest speaker and yoga instructor Rodrigo Souza taught about the benefits of the therapeutic use of yoga for all types of patients and guided us through a complimentary yoga session. While sharing his own experiences with rehabilitation after a traumatic spinal cord injury, Souza not only inspired by sharing his personal struggles but also provided insight to how OTs can use inclusive yoga to their advantage when treating patients presenting with a wide variety of conditions



Downstate Community Healthy Lifestyle Fair

First and Second year OT students brought the fun and excitement on Saturday, September 9th by setting up games and activities to encourage attendees to play and be physically active. Helpful tips were shared with children and families to promote routines that support learning and development. The OT students also gave a fantastic presentation on backpack awareness for school-age children to learn how bookbags should be worn appropriately in order to minimize back stress and prevent pain and injury.



Backpack Awareness Day

On Wednesday, September 20th, National Backpack Awareness Day, the OT students went to P.S. 235 and Parkside Preparatory Academy to give fun and interactive presentations to elementary students about the correct ways to choose, adjust, and wear backpacks for school. Smaller teaching pairs then broke off to go to individual classrooms to emphasize the big take-aways, complete backpack-themed activities, and weigh student backpacks to investigate proper weight distribution.



FACULTY RECOGNITION:

CONGRATULATIONS TO BRIGITTE DESPORT, DPS, OTR/L, BCP, ATP



A special shoutout to Dr. Desport, Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives and Associate Professor, for receiving the 2023 Schneps Media Latin Community Impact Award this summer. The award honors Dr. Desport's outstanding contributions in pediatrics and early intervention at SUNY Downstate and beyond. She has dedicated her clinical practice to supporting black and brown communities with adequate services and ensuring that families are better equipped in the transition process from the NICU to home. Her research focuses on understanding the environmental and contextual factors that influence families' progression back to home with their newborn.

In addition to her devotion to equitable care, Dr. Desport is also a leading force in student mentorship, having co-founded the SUNY Downstate Chapters of the National Perinatal Association Student Society (NPASS) and the Black Students of Excellence (BSE). When discussing how students can position themselves to find effective mentors, she shares that while it should happen organically, mentees can also be active participants in developing rapport. For example, "Come with the same level of contribution," she says, "you might be bringing something to the space that I'm not aware of." She also encourages students to explore possibilities with their mentors, "It's what you make it," she explains, "mentorships can evolve into publications, projects, etc. The sky's the limit!"

Congratulations to Dr. Desport for her exemplary accomplishments and well-deserved recognition!

Downstate OT Word Search



Find the following words!

occupation	inclusion	holistic	abilities
downstate	wellbeing	therapy	healing
community	recovery	empathy	adapt

Read what the Downstate OT community has to say about their journeys so far!



ALITHIA ALLEYNE
Program Administrator, OT Program
Chair, SUNY University Faculty Senate
Communications Committee

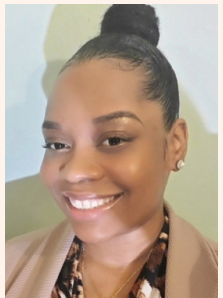
"To me, OT means a better outcome. Downstate showed me how vital OT is to children and adults with cognitive impairments. To anyone pursuing OT, Congratulations! You've chosen a profession that changes lives for the better!"



EFEKONA NUWERE, Ed.D, OTR/L
Program Chair and Assistant Professor

"OT is Life! As I traverse the city, I see occupational therapy everywhere. Whether it is on the subway, a playground, or a favorite neighborhood spot, seeing individuals and populations participate in their most mundane or meaningful activities speaks to me. It reminds me of core ideals

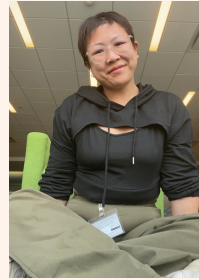
of occupational therapy, and that occupational therapy must continue to push to reduce barriers to participation. Much in the spirit of occupational therapy, Downstate is collaborative, resourceful, innovative, and community-focused. Talented and dedicated people are all around. It's been wonderful to see people from different communities in NY gather here in Central Brooklyn to work collaboratively and achieve. To anyone pursuing OT, volunteer. Connect with an OT practitioner and shadow them. OT has many specialties and sub-specialties. Learn about the profession by immersing yourself in it, as much as you can, so that you can identify the common theme of OT, regardless of the setting."



NADINE JOHNSON, OTS
Class of 2024

"To me, OT means working with people of all ages, with disabilities or injuries, to increase their independence and functional capabilities, so they can perform their daily tasks and participate in meaningful and enjoyable activities. Downstate has positively influenced my perception of OT by exposing

me to multiple learning and service opportunities and also because the OT faculty members are impressive to me. They are well-versed, have multiple specialties, have private practices, and are actively involved in research, advocacy, and serve at a national level – all of which inspire me to excel! To anyone pursuing OT, work hard but enjoy the journey because it goes by fast! Also, seek out and participate in new opportunities outside of academics to learn and serve, it will enrich your experience greatly."



PENNY (PEIHW) NI, OTS
Class of 2024

"Being an OT is transferring positive energy to clients through the means of self care and health. OT allows me to utilize the medium of emotions such as happiness to drive clients in rehab. Being an OT means I help paint the outcome of my client goals

holistically! Downstate has given me the freedom to explore and discover just how special I am through academics and support from faculty and peers. Integration of knowledge and practical skills now help me in abstract thinking that promotes in clinical reasoning for patient population. Confidence and the thrill for learning promotes personal and professional development! As an OT student, my best advice is to continue doing what you love to... Focus on becoming the best version of you!"

ALÈ RAMIREZ, OTS
Class of 2025



"OT is diversity, advocacy, equity, inclusion, and respect for others and the place they hold within society. Downstate has showed me how wide, diverse and adaptable the OT profession is and can be towards providing quality of life. To future OTs, be open to the educational experiences you will be receiving. Question what may be outdated or what

may need more support and advocacy. But before all else, understand your capacities and biases so you can provide a more insightful and caring future for yourself and others."



JENNY LI, OTS
Class of 2025

"To me, Occupational Therapy is a means of providing myself and my future patients with the worldview to approach life more meaningfully and purposefully. OT has taught me to view every activity I engage in as a part of my identity and has encouraged me to do things with intentionality. I want to

inspire and rehabilitate my future patients so that they can healthily and safely engage in the activities most meaningful to them. The community at Downstate has given me a real life example of how being surrounded by a strong support system positively impacts my overall wellbeing and allows me to successfully perform in my role as an OTS. My incredibly kind, brilliant, and supportive cohort has reassured me that my future profession is in amazing hands, full of individuals who truly care for one another and will wholeheartedly serve their patients. To anyone on the path to OT, Come to Downstate! Find your support system and be prepared to weather through some rigorous academics but never lose sight of the importance of OT and your reason for choosing OT in the first place."



HEY DOWNSTATE OT ALUMNI! LET'S CATCH UP...

As Downstate's Occupational Therapy Program 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 to 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.

Your involvement, no matter the level, would greatly enrich our Downstate OT community and help us stay connected with your amazing journey. Please let us know your thoughts and preferences, and we'll be happy to arrange a time to chat or meet that suits you best. You can reach me directly by email at: efekona.nuwere@downstate.edu.

Thank you for your time, and I hope to hear from you soon!

- Efekona Nuwere, Ed.D, OTR/L, Program Chair

Please scan this QR code to tell us what type of events you would like to see for alumni in the future!



STUDENT SHOUTOUTS! MARION DELA PENA, OTS

Marion Dela Pena, a 2nd-year OT student, was the first OT student to be selected to represent Downstate at the 2023 Emory Global Health Competition in Atlanta, Georgia this past March. Alongside a team of medical, neuroscience, & public health students, Marion created & presented a sustainable business proposal to the Emory Global Health panel on the selected topic of preventing maternal death in Haiti's Central Plateau. It was a unique opportunity to collaborate with future healthcare professionals from universities around the world to discuss global health topics and learn from global health leaders.



JANE SATO, OTS

Jane Sato, a 3rd-year OT student, has been chosen to receive The State University of New York Association of Council Members and College Trustees (ACT) Excellence and Student Initiative Scholarship. This scholarship recognizes outstanding academic performance and extraordinary commitment to the campus and community. Jane will be honored at an awards luncheon on Saturday, October 14th at The Crowne Plaza Albany, Desmond Hotel in Albany, NY.



JENNA DARLETH, OTS

Jenna Darleth is a 2nd-year OT student who was drawn to the field by her love of dance and the physical, mental, social and developmental benefits it had on her life. After growing up watching her loved ones living with disabilities, she began her professional journey as an occupational therapy aide working in hand therapy. As the proud president of the Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) here at Downstate, Jenna collaborates with fellow students, faculty, and other chapters of SOTA and COTAD to increase awareness of the benefits and fundamentals of OT, and its importance within an interdisciplinary healthcare team.



Tuesday, 10/3	Advisory Board Meeting
Date TBD	Guest Speaker- Taylor Blaine, OTR/L
	• All About Travel OT and Transitioning from Student to Practitioner
Date TBD	OT Advocacy Day
	• Informative tabling event sharing about different areas of OT and how the profession is associated with related disciplines
November	Holiday Potluck
..... 2024	
Saturday, 1/27,	January Review Course
Sunday, 1/28	

Coming Soon!