



WRIGHT COLLEGE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Thank you for your interest in Wright's Occupational Therapy Assistant Program. We hope this information will answer many of your questions about an occupational therapy career as a certified occupational therapy assistant. If this letter leaves out information important to you, call (773) 481-8875 with your questions.

What is occupational therapy? Occupational Therapy is a skilled healthcare service that uses *occupation* to promote meaningful living for people who have experienced illnesses, disorders and disabilities that prevent them from participating in day-to-day living. Occupations are all of the ways individuals choose to "do" what has meaning and value to them. An occupational therapy practitioner uses professional knowledge and skills to adapt activities, tasks and the environment so that a person with disruption in his or her life can resume doing what gives daily life personal value, meaning and satisfaction.

What kind of abilities does an occupational therapy practitioner need? A successful occupational therapy practitioner enjoys working with people of all ages and backgrounds, has creative and resourceful problem-solving abilities, good communication skills and likes work that is never routine. The professionally trained certified occupational therapy assistant is a life-long learner, always seeking out new information that helps provide the best and most current treatment interventions.

Where do certified occupational therapy assistants work? Because occupational therapy practitioners address the occupational needs of people in any area of their lives, practitioners can work in many types of settings. These include traditional hospital and nursing home rehabilitation clinics and school settings for children with special needs. But many therapy assistants are finding fascinating and rewarding work in community settings, too. Examples are day programs for elders, workshops for developmentally delayed teens, shelters for women and children, special recreation camps, and residences that teach independent living skills to people with mental illnesses. Some certified occupational therapy assistants are employed as activity program coordinators or

as case managers. The ability to understand and apply meaningful occupation can open the door to many different work opportunities.

What is job availability like? Currently there are job openings in the Chicago area and throughout the United States. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that demand for occupational therapy assistant services will increase approximately 43% through the year 2024. This OTA Program has been in operation since 1976 and has a strong record of graduating practitioners who have been successful at finding rewarding jobs as occupational therapy assistants. Starting salaries for occupational therapy assistants currently range from around \$38,440 to \$57,870.

How long is the OTA Program? The formal program is scheduled over a two-year period. Students can apply for admission after completing five general education prerequisite courses and the *Foundations of Human Occupation* class. The final semester of the program each student is assigned to two different fieldwork education sites to complete a total of sixteen weeks of professional on-the-job training.

What are classes like? Classes include a variety of learning experiences and are designed to match many different learning styles. The OTA Program emphasizes “learning by doing” so students often work in small groups to practice skills and discuss real-life types of occupational therapy challenges. Most classes also include opportunities to visit facilities in the community to observe or practice skills learned in the classroom setting.

What is the faculty like? Experienced occupational therapy practitioners with many years of experience and expertise teach in a variety of practice areas. Guest instructors include working occupational therapy assistants and occupational therapists. The OTA Program’s philosophy of teaching is to see instructors as guides and facilitators for students. Faculty is always available to advise and assist program participants. OTA graduates leave the program well prepared to continue independent learning as professionals.

What are the students like? Just like the people receiving occupational therapy services, students come from all walks of life and include young and old. Often graduates comment on their class being like a “second family.”

How do I apply for formal program admission? You can obtain an application packet by mail if you call (773) 481-8875 and request one, or stop in Room L281 of the Learning Resource Center to pick up a packet. Formal program admission occurs each fall semester. The application packets become available in June. If you are in the process of completing the required general education courses and the *Foundations of Human Occupation* class and wish to apply for formal program admission, you may begin the application process.

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Here's the information you requested.....