PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The program philosophy of the OTA program reflects the current published philosophy of the profession and describes Northwood Technical College OTA program beliefs about human beings and how they learn.

Occupational Therapy's Philosophy

Faculty believe that engagement in occupation is essential to the delivery of quality occupational therapy. ("Philosophical Base of Occupational Therapy," 2017)

Occupations are activities that bring meaning to the daily lives of individuals, families, and communities and enable them to participate in society. All individuals have an innate need and right to engage in meaningful occupations throughout their lives. Participation in these occupations influences their development, health, and well-being across the lifespan...engagement in occupations is also the ultimate goal of therapy. (AOTA)

The Occupational Therapy Assistant faculty recognize that occupations are unique to the individual and their experience and that preparing students to plan occupation-based intervention is fundamental. Students are expected to incorporate an occupation-based approach with all clients.

Beliefs about human beings and how they learn

Human beings want to be engaged in the learning process. Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence research indicates that each learner possesses certain strengths or "intelligences" that may benefit individual learning. All persons possess 8-9 intelligences. Learners differ on these dimensions and no two people are alike. Intelligence is not the same as a style or approach to learning. Gardner believes that the educator should know as much as possible about the student and teach and assess in ways that bring out the learner's capacity (Gardner, 2013).

While in the program, students complete a multiple intelligence assessment to determine their individual intelligences. The program acknowledges different student intelligences by assessing students in a variety of ways such as exams, quizzes, presentations, posters, group activities, media projects, and community-based projects. Assessing in multiple ways allows learners to demonstrate skills and understanding in different ways. While courses require certain demonstration of knowledge and skills, learners can always anticipate that they will be evaluated in multiples ways during each course.

Gardner also is a proponent of the concept of pluralizing. This is when the educator presents topics, concepts, or ideas of greatest importance in a variety of ways. When a topic is taught in multiple ways, Gardner believes more students learn the material. Additionally, multiple modes of delivery help the learner understand something better (Gardner, 2013).

OTA Faculty create meaningful learning environments that address multiple student styles. Faculty present information in a variety of ways, including visual mind maps, PowerPoints, auditory power points/pronunciations, and hands-on tasks to improve understanding of the material.

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Anthony Gregorc documents four learning styles including learning preferences, stressors, and study skills for each learning style. Learners are unique with individual needs and talents. For effective learning to occur, one must acknowledge the individuality of learners and create a non-threatening environment where learner contributions are valued. Learners learn best when they are nurtured and supported, allowing for personal growth and success (Gregorc, 1998).

While in the program, students complete Gregorc Learning Style Assessment to determine their individual learning style. If students are aware of their own learning styles, they can take an active role to create the most meaningful learning environment.

Each individual in the OTA program is expected to be both a learner and a teacher. Learners are encouraged to think outside of the box and become comfortable with ambiguity and creativity. Learners must be exposed to a variety of learning situations and experiences to develop clinical reasoning. Learners need to know expectations and receive prompt feedback to modify performance and develop competency. Self-reflection is a powerful tool for learning and is evident throughout the OTA program, with the use of *I learned statements*. Students complete reflection papers throughout the curriculum. They also complete *I learned statements* after Core Ability Assessments, Fieldwork Performance Evaluation, and leading of groups.

The same learning principles are used for the distance education portion of the curriculum. Whether the learning environment is in person, ITV, or in Blackboard, the principles are relevant and consistent. The program has one completely online course in 4th semester, OT Practice and Management (10-514-185). In this online course, students are still evaluated in multiple ways and use their own strengths to master the material.

The Approach

The OTA program is committed to the belief that learning is a life-long journey where learners gain knowledge through the use of innovative techniques, technology, and student reflection. Faculty create an environment where learners engage in meaningful experiences where learning comes first. Learners achieve personal and professional goals through the use of a strengths-based approach, evaluation of core abilities, collaborative learning, and student reflection.

References

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