The past year has been filled with changes at Eastern Washington University’s Occupational Therapy Department. Read on to learn about student involvement in fieldwork and the community, updates from faculty and program alumni, and opportunities for involvement with SOTA!

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Transitions

The Occupational Therapy program at EWU has experienced many changes over the past several months. First, we are now a part of the newly-formed College of Health Sciences and Public Health led by founding Dean, Dr. Laureen O’Hanlon. Dr. O’Hanlon is a speech pathologist with many years of academic experience. Her leadership and support has had a positive impact on the day-to-day support of program operations. Dr. Greg Wintz, long-time Chair for the program resigned in June and is now the Chair for the OTD program at Pacific University in Oregon. Carrie Walker, secretary for the program, resigned to take a position with the University of Washington Medical School – Spokane campus. Although she is only one floor removed from us we have certainly felt the loss of both her and Dr. Wintz. Dr. Robert Krueger has resigned, effective at the completion of the Spring semester. He is looking forward to returning to his organic farm in Oregon and spending time with his family, especially his new granddaughter. Janis Battan, Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and Lecturer is retiring in August and looking forward to more time with family and friends.

In Fall term we transitioned from quarters to semesters with very few hitches thanks to dedicated faculty and resilient students. The Spokane campus looks forward to moving all programs to the semester calendar so interprofessional learning opportunities can be more readily designed and implemented. We have welcomed Lee Knous as our new Senior Secretary who has experience working in the Student Services offices at EWU and in various administrative positions in other colleges.

With changes in people and calendars comes opportunities. One such opportunity realized Fall semester was a partnership with St. Luke’s Rehabilitation Institute. We are now able to provide community clinicians from St. Luke’s as experts for our lab experiences in the Adult course. All involved have expressed realizing benefits from this partnership. We were also able to capitalize on a collaboration with the community organization Vet’s Garage for whom we established an occupation-based Health and Wellness group implemented by students mentored and supervised by community OT Randy Holliman. This was a clear success and a program we will continue to provide.

I invite you to visit your alma mater any time and encourage you to consider the opportunities before us that you may be interested in. Searches for vacant faculty positions (including fieldwork coordinator) will be posted soon, interview day is March 5th (we welcome all volunteers) and the Spokane Teaching Health Clinic is expected to open in August, creating a whole new set of opportunities. Please stay in touch and keep us updated on changes, opportunities and other news in your life!

Donna Mann, Associate Professor, Interim Chair
Occupational Therapy
College of Health Science and Public Health
**Faculty Spotlight:**

**Janis Battan**

This June, I will be completing my brief but extremely rewarding career of teaching, followed by my full retirement from Eastern’s Master OT program in August. I have been blessed to have had this experience and will always be grateful to the faculty and students for allowing me to join with them on their journey. To fully retire from the profession I truly love, I will also be completing my ten year association with the WOTA Executive Board.

As a professor and academic fieldwork coordinator in the OT program at Eastern, I had the opportunity to see students evolving into clinicians. From reading their application essays and interviewing students on Interview Day through the two years of academic training and beyond to their final Fieldwork II, I have been heartened by their excitement, drive, and commitment to becoming practicing occupational therapists and making a difference in the lives of the people we serve. I have also had the wonderful opportunity to learn from and work with our dedicated faculty. When I arrived I was overcome with the hours and energy our faculty gives day after day, offering their best to our students and then reaching for even better. Throughout the years, I have been overwhelmed by their generosity of time, experience and knowledge. To be able to work with such accomplished OTs and realize their passion for occupational therapy has been a wonderful gift at the ending of my career.

And finally, as I reflect on my career, I have been so blessed to have shared my life as an occupational therapist with the family of OTs in this community. I am in awe of my career not because of what I have achieved by any means but of the wonderful OTs who I have met and worked with along the way. I could not be more grateful.

I look forward to retirement as a time to re-create. It will be an adventure. I do not know what will be on the other side. But I am ready to see what happens and look forward to this new chapter.

-Janis Battan

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**Upcoming Fundraisers**

1. **Froyo Earth:**
   Just mention EWU OT when you check out and Froyo Earth will donate 20% to SOTA.
   - March 24th: Spokane Froyo Earth on Hamilton by Gonzaga - 4p-10p
   - March 31st: Cheney Froyo Earth - All Day

2. **EWU OT Apparel Sale:**
   Purchase a variety of OT apparel from Stadium Sports online. Clothing orders can be picked up after April 30th in the OT Dept. Office.
   - When: March 28th - April 15
   - Where: Order online at: http://store.stadiumsports.org/categories.php?i=45

3. **Auction:**
   A silent auction will be held at the second year students’ pinning ceremony in May. Proceeds will be divided between SOTA and community organizations selected by the class of 2016. You can help by donating money, gift cards, products, and/or services.
   - Where: items can be brought to the Riverpoint Campus or pick up can be arranged
   - When: items donated by April 6th
   - Contact: Erin Dunsmore erinrader@gmail.com, 509-863-3262
WOTA Conference 2015: Therapy Outside the Box

Nichole Webber

Another year of record numbers came and went for the annual conference put on by the Washington Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA). Angela Bosse, WOTA Continuing Education/Conference chair, reported that the conference, held in Tacoma, WA in October of 2015, welcomed almost 300 participants, 44 presenters, 14 posters, 17 sponsors, and 47 student volunteers from around the state (including a small group from EWU). When asked how she thought the conference went, WOTA president Sarah Jensen replied, “WOTACON was a huge success on so many levels! It was great to meet so many members, especially some of the amazing EWU students. The buzz surrounding session topics was so educational and inspiring.”

Therapy Outside the Box was the conference theme and the title of the session lead by the inspiring keynote speaker, Carol Decker. Carol became ill when she was pregnant with her second child, which resulted in her total lost of vision and a triple-amputation. Carol shared her thought-provoking story of how “out of the box therapies” led to her successful recovery. Decker’s speech was powerful and motivating, reinforcing the incredible impact OTs can have on patients’ lives if we choose to truly invest in their recovery. This theme was further supported with sessions such as Building an Avengers AT Team, The OTR/OTA Team: Collaborative Relationships Across Settings, and SWEAT (Staff Wellness Exercise Activity Time).

Seven different awards were presented at the conference, including the Rosemary Funk Award, which was presented to one of Eastern’s own professors, Janis Battan, M.O.L., OTR/L. The Rosemary Funk Award “is a lifetime achievement award which recognizes a WOTA member who has provided on-going leadership to WOTA through long term contributions and commitment to WOTA”.

Even though WOTACON was in Western Washington this year, EWU faculty and students were able to make a strong presence, reinforcing the quality and the commitment of the program and its faculty and students. With WOTACON back on the east side next year, Eastern will hopefully have an even stronger representation. Stephanie Rodriguez, WOTA Membership Chair, wanted to extend a “thank you to everyone that attended WOTACON this year. I enjoy hearing all the positive feedback. I am looking forward to WOTACON 2016 in the Tri-cities”.

Thank you, Janis...

Janis Battan was awarded the Rosemary Funk Award at this year’s WOTA Conference. This award recognizes Janis’ lifelong commitment to the profession of occupational therapy. Her leadership and wisdom will be greatly missed by the EWU OT Program as she retires this year.

Thank you, Janis, for your dedication to the education of future occupational therapists and your passion for occupational therapy - we have been lucky to have you!
Hey, EWU OT class of 2013! Phil would like to know how everyone is doing, especially all the babies who were born during the program. Phil comments, “Something about OT school really brings out the babies I guess” and now Phil and his wife have a baby girl who was born at the end of February. Congratulations, Phil, on the newest addition to your family!

As this year’s newsletter is focused on transitions, the alumni spotlight details Phil’s journey as an OT and the transition he made from St. Luke’s Rehabilitation Institute to Spokane Occupational and Hand Therapy.

How long have you been an OT and what has your journey been in OT practice?
I have been an OT for 2 years now. I started out working at St. Luke’s Rehab Institute on the Inpatient stroke unit (CVA). I worked there for almost a year, before moving over the outpatient setting at Spokane Occupational and Hand Therapy. Working at St. Luke’s was a really good experience and great place to start my OT career. I had good mentors and was able to work closely with many different healthcare professionals (PTs, SLPs, OTs, physicians, social workers, psychologists, nurses, case managers). I really enjoyed being able to collaborate with other providers face to face on a weekly and often daily basis.

What was the transition like from St. Luke’s to Spokane OT and Hand? What led you in that direction?
The transition from St. Luke’s to SOHT was like night and day. Moving into the world of outpatient hand therapy was a big learning curve... especially not having much prior experience in hand therapy. They have been great at SOHT, though, and have provided great mentorship. I am able to work with very experienced hand therapists who I learn from daily. I was led toward hand therapy because I have always been intrigued with the complexity of hand anatomy, and I wanted to be able to specialize in something within OT. Within the next 3-4 years, I hope to become certified in hand therapy. The amount of knowledge required to become a certified hand therapist (CHT) seems daunting at times (pass rate for initial test takers is between 50-60%), but I am assured by my co-workers and I know have a good support system and work that will help me get there.

What do you like most about your position?
I like making custom splints (although I still don’t feel like I am very good at it!). I also enjoy working with people who genuinely want to be there and who are motivated to get better. Oh, and I was also able to watch several hand surgeries last year, which was really cool.

What are you excited about for your future as an OT?
I am excited to pursue becoming a CHT. Hand therapy is challenging, and I feel like I learn something new every day. Another thing I’m excited about is to see where I’ll be in 10 or even 20 years. Being an OT offers me the opportunity and flexibility to explore other settings in healthcare if I ever decide to.

Being an OT offers me the opportunity and flexibility to explore other settings”
Students Helping Veterans: 
A Health & Wellness Project with Vet’s Garage

This last fall, two 2nd year OT students, Aubrey and Gary, implemented a health and wellness project with Vet’s Garage, a Spokane community organization which focuses on helping veterans transition to civilian life. Vet’s Garage offers an environment where veterans can learn technical and vocational skills such as woodworking and fabrication, receive help for accessing healthcare, legal, financial aid, and mental health services, and develop relationships with other veterans.

Over the course of 8 weeks, Gary and Aubrey facilitated sessions focusing on different health topics of interest to the veterans. According to Aubrey, the purpose of the project was to “raise the veterans’ awareness throughout the sessions such as, “this is almost therapeutic” and “I wish this would never end.” According to Gary, “it was truly a positive experience for all.”

This health and wellness project also had a personal impact on Gary and Aubrey. Gary stated, “this project really reinforced the power of OT for me. By utilizing the skills, theories, and group process models specific to OT, I was able to see the positive outcomes that are associated with OT intervention for groups.” Aubrey said, “this project helped me see the members as individuals who are survivors.” The success of this health and wellness project with Vet’s Garage shows the value and power of occupation, as well as the difference OT can make on a community level.

Thank you, Dr. Krueger...

Dr. Rob Krueger will be leaving the EWU OT Department this June. The faculty and students will miss his positive, lively attitude and passion for the profession of OT.

“Dr. Krueger: I want to thank you for all you have done for me and our class in our journey to becoming occupational therapists. I have appreciated your positive attitude, your willingness to answer questions and your great sense of humor. All of the greenspace research team will greatly miss you.”

—Danielle Meehan, 2nd year student

“Thank you for all of your wisdom, time, patience, and support throughout the program, especially with research. I appreciate the way you gave us the opportunity to really take on the research as our own (while still giving guidance when it was needed)). The Greenspace group would not be so fun without your positivity and ability to make us laugh when things get stressful! The OT department was lucky to have you, and you will be missed by many! Best of luck in your future endeavors!”

—Nichole Webber, 2nd year student
“We learn by practice”—Martha Graham. In my experiences at EWU, one lesson I learned is that one of the most important learning experiences happen outside of the classroom, specifically in fieldwork sites. Occupational therapy students have often heard about the importance of “learning by doing”, and the fieldwork experiences available in Eastern’s program embrace this philosophy. Observing how other occupational therapists interact with clients, administer assessments, complete evaluations, and/or provide occupation-based interventions in fieldwork 1 settings provides students with real world examples of occupational therapy practice.

So far I have participated in two fieldwork 1 experiences, both at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center in the inpatient environment. Last spring, I went to the adolescent inpatient psychiatric wing where I learned about the role of occupational therapy in mental health. This fieldwork experience further facilitated my understanding of mental health services because I saw occupation-based interventions implemented in a clinical setting instead of just reading about different interventions, which helped illustrate the efficacy of interventions related to mental health practice. I was challenged in this experience by transitioning from an observer to an active participant by leading a sensory modulation group. Assuming the role of active participant forced me to develop my client interaction skills and a therapeutic relationship with the clients, which is critical in OT practice. The clients and my fieldwork supervisor provided me feedback on skills that needed further development, which I continued to develop in my second fieldwork 1 experience. My second fieldwork 1 experience was also at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center but on the acute care floors. My goal for this experience was to understand the role of occupational therapy in acute care in preparation for an interview with Harborview Medical Center for fieldwork II. Even though I was more of an observer, I was exposed to all the acute care units, including the intensive care unit (ICU), which helped me prepare for my interview with Harborview and provided an opportunity to represent EWU occupational therapy students at Harborview Medical Center this upcoming fall.

With my fieldwork experiences so far, I have developed skills such as administering assessments, documentation, interacting with clients, and providing occupation-based interventions, and these skills will continue to develop in my future fieldwork II experiences after graduation in May. The majority of occupational therapy happens outside of the classroom and access to various fieldwork opportunities throughout the curriculum allows students to apply skills learned in the classroom to real clients in order to facilitate the successful transition from the role of student to the role of practitioner.

About Jessica

Jessica is part of the class of 2016. She completed her bachelor’s degree in Public Health at the University of Washington. Her first FW site is Richmond Beach Skilled Nursing Facility in Shoreline, WA this summer, followed by her fall FW placement at Harborsview Medical Center in Seattle, WA. She would eventually like to work in acute care and provide OT services in developing countries. She spends her time outside of school participating in Zumba, working with children, and volunteering in various places through her church.
FW II Experience: Miles Pfaff

No matter how much one prepares for it, the divide between the school world of textbooks and lectures and the real world of clients and interventions will always exist. At the end of the day, there’s only so much endless PowerPoints and three page essays can teach you about the world that lies just beyond graduation. Fortunately, fieldwork acts as that perfect transition. That stepping stone between one side of the divide and the other. Working with actual clients and experiencing how to apply those PowerPoint bullets has been incredibly helpful.

Throughout the last two and a half years, Eastern has done a fantastic job of preparing me, and my cohort, for fieldwork. There is nothing more enjoyable than to actually apply that bit of information from kinesiology or that strategy from PhysDis which you swore to your classmate you’d NEVER use. Each day, I’m constantly thanking Dr. Burwash and Professor Norell for their mental health classes, Dr. Snover for anatomy, Dr. Wintz for activity analysis, Dr. Mann for pediatrics, Dr. Krueger for hands, Professor Battan for geriatrics and aging, and Professor Goff for conditions. There is no class or presentation that prepared me for fieldwork more so than the elite and caring collection of professors (and now friends) who have helped make my last two years very enjoyable.

One of the most unique aspects of fieldwork is its ability to immerse you in an area of practice. The highs, the lows, the challenges, and the successes. For me, being able to see both outpatient pediatrics and adult rehab with two great instructors has been better than I ever could have asked for. With Nick DeGroat in outpatient pediatrics, Nick and the kids taught me far more than just the intricacies of the position. They taught me how to celebrate even the smallest of accomplishments, how to never take for granted the ability to tie a shoe, and how nothing turns a day around like a scooter board, a swing, or a sticker. In outpatient adult rehab with Peter Ashford, not only have I learned the ins and outs of ortho, neuro, and pain rehab, but also how to talk with people to really hear their story, their way of going about life, and how to integrate that fully into their plan of care. I’ve been beyond fortunate in my fieldwork experiences and they’re experiences I wouldn’t trade for anything. In the end, fieldwork is the glue needed to combine all the skills school provided to make the jump over the chasm between school and that final, ultimate goal.

About Miles

Miles said he chose occupational therapy as a profession because his best friend growing up was in a wheelchair and they had always modified games and activities so he could participate. After learning about OT, he discovered that what he had been doing with his friend was very similar to what OTs do to help their clients participate in meaningful occupations. Miles’ undergraduate degree was in finance and economics from WSU, but then after he discovered OT, he made a drastic change and decided to become an occupational therapist.

Miles’ hobbies and interests include working on the family farm, snowboarding, and spending time at the lake. His future plans include taking the NBCOT, becoming a full fledged OT and getting a dog.
About the Authors
Mary Baxter, Hannah Fall, and Nichole Webber are in their second year of the Master of Occupational Therapy program at EWU. They are all active members of SOTA; Hannah is the club Secretary, Nichole is the club Treasurer, and Mary is involved with club fundraising. As second year students, they look forward to attending AOTA conference in April, graduating this spring, and starting Fieldwork II this summer. They are passionate and eager to begin their careers as occupational therapists.

How to get involved with SOTA
We appreciate the support from current students and alumni. Here’s how you can support EWU SOTA.

• Participate in one of our upcoming fundraising events listed on page 2
• Donate directly by sending a check payable to EWU SOTA.
310 N Riverpoint Blvd., Box R., Spokane, WA 99202

By contributing to SOTA, you are enabling students to attend AOTA conferences, offset costs of their pinning ceremony, and give back to the community through various events and donations. Because of fundraising and donations, SOTA was able to sponsor a team at Parasport Spokane’s Able-Bodied Wheelchair Basketball Tournament. We loved being involved with this great community event! Further financial support will enable SOTA to be more involved with community organizations and raise awareness of occupational therapy as a profession.