Assessment of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program

St. Charles Community College

2013 – 2014

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March 2014

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I. MISSION AND GOALS

College Mission and Vision Statement

"SCC serves our community by focusing on academic excellence, student success, workforce advancement, and life-long learning within a global society. We celebrate diversity and we enrich the economic and cultural vitality of the region by providing an accessible, comprehensive, and supportive environment for teaching and learning."

Vision of Institution:

"Our passion for student success is reflected in an array of innovative academic, career/technical, workforce development, and community programs. Our partnerships and cultural opportunities enrich and transform our community."

Mission of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program

Consistent with the college's mission for providing opportunities for students to achieve their personal and professional goals in a global society, the occupational therapy assistant program provides its students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for ethical, competent, and reflective practice to fulfill their professional roles. In keeping with the college's mission to respond to the community, the OTA program strives to meet the health care needs of residents of St. Charles County and the adjoining rural counties comprising the expanded college district in the state of Missouri. The OTA program seeks to implement its mission by providing:

- The highest quality instruction and practice to its students using sound innovative instructional methods and technology.
- Open communication, mutual respect and trust among students, faculty, and others involved in the program.
- A comprehensive curriculum that integrates studies in science, humanities, communication, social sciences, and critical thinking.
- A solid foundation in the fundamental knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for therapeutic professional practice.
- Experiences emphasizing the need for life-long learning to remain a competent practitioner.
- Opportunities to work in collaborative groups and teams with differing backgrounds and views necessary in the workforce.
- Meaningful learning experiences that foster exploration of the community, available resources, and organizations that expand beyond local boundaries.

Philosophy of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program

Consistent with the professions philosophical base, the OTA Program acknowledges individuals as active beings whose development throughout the life span is influenced by their participation in purposeful activity. Purposeful activity or occupation is the means for individuals to engage in meaningful behaviors and valued life roles. This view maintains that occupation is an essential aspect of human life and health. Mary Beth Early states that Athe engagement in activities allows humans to use their minds and bodies in concert to develop skills and ideas, to produce things that benefit themselves and others, to create their own lives, and to maintain their own health. Occupation is viewed as a tool in restoring health in a variety of contexts.

Engagement in occupations also enables individuals to adapt to their environment. The ability to adapt promotes survival and self-actualization and may occur any time throughout the life cycle. This process of adaptation can be interrupted because of biological, psychological, social, spiritual or environmental factors. An awareness of the conditions, contexts and barriers that impede performance leads to recognition of how to adapt and compensate to improve function.

The OTA program embraces the AOTA official philosophical base by articulating the following beliefs:

That occupational therapy, as an art and applied science, is a creative and expanding discipline occurring in a variety of settings. OT is based on application of principles from biopsychosocial sciences and the inter-relationship of theory, practice and research. We believe that OT is a dynamic interaction between the client and therapist designed to promote health, prevent injury or disability and provide intervention which may develop, improve, sustain, or restore the highest possible level of independence to the individual. This intervention may occur throughout the life cycle and at various points along the health-illness continuum.

That occupation may be used to prevent and mediate dysfunction, maintain wellness, and to elicit maximum adaptation. By understanding the biological, psychological, social, spiritual and environmental factors that may interrupt the adaptation process, the occupational therapy assistant will be able to provide and use familiar or new activities for both an intrinsic and therapeutic purpose. In order to adapt to a change in functional status, an important function of the occupational therapy process will be to assist the individual in creating a new vision of life roles, responsibilities, and occupations. With this understanding, the OTA will be able to assist the individual in choosing and reaching the highest level of function which is meaningful and has purpose for that individual.

That the skills required by the OTA include: creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, and the ability to work with persons of similar and different ages, ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic, and occupational backgrounds. A certified occupational therapy assistant must work cooperatively within a multi-disciplinary team. Entry level competence will be achieved as technical skills, and learning activities are added to an understanding of the

biopsychosociological development of the individual which is rooted in the general education courses.

That the role of the OTA in conjunction with the OT results in a collaborative, interdependent, and complementary parameter of practice consistent with the educational preparation of the practitioner. Differentiated roles within occupational therapy reflect collaborative, mutually valued practice with emphasis on interdependence among and between various entry level, intermediate, and advanced practice therapists.

That attitudes, beliefs, and values integral to the occupational therapy profession include that:

1. There is intrinsic value in daily purposeful activities and occupations.
2. All human occupations have emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual, and contextual dimensions.
3. Human performance exists within a multifaceted environment.
4. Active involvement in occupation can minimize disability, develop compensatory behaviors and skills, and promote health.
5. People may be independent in a variety of ways.
   Individuals have the right to choose their activities and the context in which they are performed.

<u>Occupational Therapy Assistant Program Goals</u>

The overall goal of the Occupational Therapy Assistant program is to educate competent graduates who are prepared for entry level practice in a variety of settings. The program also strives to prepare graduates to be successful in passing the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy examination. Passage of this examination is required to attain licensure in most states, including Missouri.

The program outcomes are based on the graduate competencies that identify the common characteristics of the three roles of the occupational therapy assistant. Program evaluation data is collected to quantify graduate and employer satisfaction and program effectiveness. Educational program outcomes are:

1. At least 85% of students will pass level 2 fieldwork experiences with a passing score of at least 70 points on the Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant.

2. The graduate class pass rate for occupational therapy assistant students taking the NBCOT examination for first time candidates will meet or exceed the national average.

3. At least 80% of graduates will be employed as an occupational therapy assistant or a role related to the occupational therapy assistant.

4. At least 80% of graduates are highly satisfied or satisfied with the OTA program.

5. At least 80% of graduates believe they are well prepared or adequately prepared to meet the program competencies.

6. At least 80% of graduates meet their employer's expectations.

7. At least 80% of employers are highly satisfied or satisfied with the graduate.

II. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

A variety of instruments are used to assess the outcomes of the Occupational Therapy Assistant program. The following instruments are used:

Level 2 Fieldwork Performance Evaluation

Level 2 fieldwork is completed during the last semester of the occupational therapy assistant program. The national standards dictate that students must perform at least two rotations of eight weeks duration each in fieldwork sites that serve different client groups or populations. This evaluation is completed by the supervising therapist of the student assigned to the fieldwork site. It is a document that reviews the student's performance in carrying out patient related activities, either in a direct service capacity or in a non-direct manner (such as completing required documentation, setting up treatment areas, etc.) A numerical score is obtained in six general treatment areas. These scores range from a "1" the lowest score and interpreted as unsatisfactory performance to a "4" which exceeds expectations. A student must attain an overall score of "70" points to pass the fieldwork experience. In addition, the student must pass the patient safety ratings on two of the questions in order to pass the entire experience. This evaluation instrument is administered after the first four weeks at the midterm point and again at the completion of the eighth and final week of the rotation. The fieldwork performance evaluation form is a copyrighted form and is included in the appendix.

Student Evaluation of Fieldwork Experiences

Students must complete this evaluation of each Level 2 fieldwork experience. This instrument was developed by the AOTA and provides the school with feedback about the experience and supervision provided at the facility site as well as the student's perception of the most relevant educational courses that apply to the clinical education site. The student is able to make suggestions that are reviewed by the OTA Curriculum Committee and Advisory Committee for possible revision and inclusion.

National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy Examination (NBCOT)

Skill assessment is based on the results of a national certification examination that takes place after students have graduated and successfully completed all clinical and coursework. The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) is a not-for-profit credentialing agency responsible for the development and implementation of all policies related to the certification of occupational therapy personnel. It is an independent national credentialing agency that certifies eligible persons as occupational therapist registered (OTR) or certified occupational therapy assistant (COTA). To take the NBCOT examination, graduates must apply for certification after completion of all academic and clinical work. The college must send official transcripts to verify that students have met the requirements. After all paperwork is processed and payment made, the graduate has 90 days to arrange a date for taking the test.

Graduates receive NBCOT examination results within two to four weeks of completing the exam. Feedback is mailed to candidates who fail the examination outlining the domains of strengths and weaknesses. Graduates may use these results to address areas of weakness before re-taking the exam. Graduate results can be accessed by program directors on the NBCOT website. Names of graduates who have passed the exam are reported monthly on the website. The names of graduates who fail the exam are not reported – only the number of graduates who have failed is reported. The names of graduates who pass the exam upon additional attempts to pass the exam are reported with an asterisk next to the name indicating success as a re-take candidate. Beginning in summer 2013, comparative statistics of national passing rates will not refer to first time test takers but rather those students who pass the exam within one year of graduation regardless of the number of attempts.

Graduate Surveys

Graduate surveys are emailed approximately six months after graduation. Data collected on these surveys provides information on employment, salary, and areas of practice. Over the past several years, the response rate for the surveys has averaged between 60%-70% after telephone contact with respondents who did not mail or email the surveys to the program coordinator. This was possible because the number of graduates was low for the first ten years of the program. Mailings were discontinued as more prompt responses were received when materials were emailed to graduates.

Graduates are asked for feedback regarding their educational preparation in the role of a direct service provider. Graduates rate their level of preparation on a three point scale ranging from well prepared to inadequately prepared on each of the general graduate competencies. The general graduate competencies are found within each of the three identified roles of the occupational therapy assistant practitioner. They are 1) as a direct service provider of care, 2) as a facilitator/manager of care, and 3) as a member of a profession. They are also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the occupational therapy assistant program on a three point scale from highly satisfied, satisfied, to not satisfied. Survey results are tabulated and utilized for program evaluation and revision.

Employer Surveys

Employer surveys are emailed to graduates at the same time as the graduate surveys are emailed. Graduates are instructed to forward the employer survey to their supervisors. The employer survey can be emailed directly to the program coordinator for privacy of responses.

Employers are asked whether the graduate met their expectations for a new graduate and their satisfaction with the graduate. They also rate the graduate on the same general graduate competencies using the same scale as provided in the graduate surveys.

III. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT DATA (Class of 2013)

A. Level 2 Fieldwork Performance Evaluation

Goal: At least 85% of students will pass level 2 fieldwork experiences with a passing score of at least 70 points on the Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant.

Number of students enrolled at start of first level 2 fieldwork experience	21
Number of students completing first level 2 fieldwork experience:	21
Number of students with passing score of at least 70 points	21
Percentage of students with passing score of at least 70 points	100%

Goal Met Yes

Number of students enrolled at start of second level 2 fieldwork experience	21
Number of students completing second level 2 fieldwork experience	21
Number of students with passing score of at least 70 points	21
Percentage of students with passing score of at least 70 points	100%

Goal Met: Yes

Comments/Conclusions:
All students started the first and second rotations as scheduled and completed on time. No student issues or problems occurred during either rotation and all students graduated as planned.

Plan/Recommendations:
No action or additional recommendations are required.

B. NBCOT Examination Results

Goal:
The graduate class rate for occupational therapy assistant students taking the NBCOT examination for first time candidates will meet or exceed the national average.

Number of graduates taking the NBCOT exam	21
Number of graduates passing the NBCOT exam within one year of graduation	20
Percentage of graduates passing the NBCOT exam within first year:	
SCC Percentage	87%
National Average	88%

Goal Met: No

Comments/Conclusions:
The NBCOT pass rates are calculated from January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013. The total number of graduates is obtained by taking the total number of students who graduated and took the NBCOT exam for the first time. Twenty of twenty one students who graduated in May 2013 took the exam. One graduate from the 2012 class also took the exam during this time frame and passed. Two other graduates from 2012 took the exam and did not pass. One graduate from 2013 did not sit for the exam since she had numerous family obligations that prevented her studying and paying for the exam. The two graduates from the 2012 cohort who did not pass the exam within one year of graduation contributed to the lower percentage of passing than if the pass rate was based only on those graduates from 2013.

The class of 2013 was given the NBCOT Practice exam to help prepare for the certification exam. Pass rate for this class is an improvement over 2012 which was 86%.

Plan/Recommendations:
Provide funding for each graduating class to take the NBCOT Practice exam to provide practice and identification of targeted areas for review to improve overall pass rates. Explore whether online AOTA test preparation would be more effective study guide for students.

D. Graduate Survey Results (Class of 2013)

Goal:
At least 80% of graduates will be employed as an occupational therapy assistant or a role related to the occupational therapy assistant.

Number of Graduates (surveys mailed/emailed)	21
Number of graduates responding to mail/email/telephone follow-up survey	16
Number of graduates employed in an OTA role or related role	9
Number of graduates unemployed or working in another field	7
Percentage of graduates employed in an OTA role within a year of graduation	56%

Goal met: No

Goal:
At least 80% of graduates are highly satisfied or satisfied with the OTA Program.

Number of graduates highly satisfied or satisfied with the OTA Program	mailed resp	14/14
Number of graduates not satisfied with the OTA Program		0
Percentage of graduates highly satisfied or satisfied with the OTA Program		100%

Goal Met: Yes

Goal:
At least 80% of graduates believe they are well prepared or adequately prepared to meet the program competencies.

Number of graduates well prepared or adequately prepared to meet competencies	14/14
Number of graduates inadequately prepared to meet competencies	0
Percentage of graduates well prepared or adequately prepared to meet competencies	100%

Goal Met: Yes

Comments/Conclusions:
Surveys were emailed to all 21 of the 2013 graduates. 14/21 graduates (67%) returned written surveys. 9 of 14 (56%) graduates who responded were employed as an occupational therapy assistant in a variety of treatment settings. The remaining 7 graduates indicated they were unable to find full time employment as an OTA in the metropolitan St. Louis area. These graduates were either unemployed or retained jobs they had prior to entering the OTA program. 14/14 or 100% reported being highly satisfied or satisfied with the program and feel well-prepared or adequately prepared for practice. The goal was met.

*Surveys were sent via email to students in November 2013. Follow up telephone calls and an additional email were made in February and March 2014 for students not responding.

E. <u>Employer Survey Results</u> (Class of 2013)

Goal:
At least 80% of graduates meet their employers' expectations.

Number of Employer (surveys mailed)	21
Number of employers responding to mail survey	1
Number of graduates meeting their employers' expectations	1
Number of graduates not meeting their employers expectations	1
Percentage of graduates meeting employers' expectations	100%

Goal Met: Yes

Goal:
At least 80% of employers are highly satisfied or satisfied with the graduate.

Number of employers highly satisfied or satisfied with the graduate	1
Number of employers not satisfied with the graduate	0
Percentage of employers highly satisfied or satisfied with the graduate	100%

Goal Met: Yes

Goal:
At least 80% of employers believe graduates are well prepared or adequately prepared to meet the program competencies.

Number of employers believe graduate is well or adequately prepared	1
Number of employers believe graduate is inadequately prepared	0
Percentage of employers who believe graduate is well or adequately prepared	100%

Goal Met: Yes

Comments/Conclusions:
Employer surveys were emailed to all graduates with the graduate survey. One employer responded (5%). One of one employer was satisfied with the graduate. The goal was met.

V. GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS: SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The St. Charles Community College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program met of the stated goals for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Program Goal #1 At least 85% of students will pass level 2 fieldwork experiences with a passing score of at least 70 points on the Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant.

Goal Met
A total of 21 of 21 students or 100% completed the first level 2 fieldwork Experience and 21 of 21 students or 100% completed the second level 2 fieldwork. 100% of those completing both rotations achieved at least 70 points on the Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant. This is a required component for accredited programs and will continue to be closely monitored for success of each graduating class.

Program Goal #2 The graduate class pass rate for occupational therapy assistant students taking the NBCOT examination for first time candidates will meet or exceed the national average.

Goal Not Met
The SCC pass rate for first time test takers on the NBCOT exam was 87% which is slightly below the national average of 88%. Students must pass the NBCOT exam in order to become licensed to practice as an occupational therapy assistant. The exam may be repeated until the graduate successfully passes. Starting in July 2013, NBCOT changed how they will calculate the pass rate.

Program Goal #3 At least 80% of graduates will be employed as an occupational therapy assistant or a role related to the occupational therapy assistant.

Goal Not Met
Surveys were sent to all twenty one 2013 graduates with 14 returning them for a return rate of 67%. Of those returned, 7 of 14 or 50% were employed as occupational therapy assistants. 5 of 14 students found employment within 6 months of graduation.
5 of 14 (31%) had to go outside of the metropolitan St. Louis area to find full time jobs. 7 of 16 (43%) were unable to find full time employment.

Program Goal #4 At least 80% of graduates are highly satisfied or satisfied with the OTA Program.

Goal Met
14 of 14 graduate responders (100%) indicated that they were highly satisfied or satisfied with the OTA program.

Program Goal #5 At least 80% of graduates believe they are well prepared or adequately prepared to meet the program competencies.

Goal Met
14 of 14 graduate responders (100%) indicated that they were well prepared or adequately prepared to meet the program competencies.

Program Goal #6 At least 80% of graduates meet their employers' expectations.

Goal Met
Employer Surveys were emailed to all 21 graduates to distribute to their employer. 1 of 21 employers or 4% returned the surveys. 100% indicated that the graduate had met their expectations.

Program Goal #7 At least 80% of employers are highly satisfied or satisfied with the graduate.

Goal Met
1 of 21 or 5% of responding employers indicated they were highly satisfied or satisfied with the graduate.

The goals for the occupational therapy assistant program for 2014-2015 are as follows:

1. At least 85% of students will pass level 2 fieldwork experiences with a passing score of at least 70 points on the Fieldwork Performance Evaluation for the Occupational Therapy Assistant.

2. At least 80% of occupational therapy assistant students taking the NBCOT examination within the first year of graduation will pass the examination.

3. At least 80% of graduates will be employed as an occupational therapy assistant or a role related to the occupational therapy assistant.

4. At least 80% of graduates are highly satisfied or satisfied with the OTA program.

5. At least 80% of graduates believe they are well prepared or adequately prepared to meet the program competencies.

6. At least 80% of graduates meet their employer's expectations.

7. At least 80% of employers are highly satisfied or satisfied with the graduate.

VI PROGRAM REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR 2013-2014

1. The OTA program accepted 24 first year students for the fall 2013 semester. The program continues to have a wait list of those wanting to enter the program. The current wait is approximately 1 ½ -2 years.

2. There has not been a problem in hiring adjunct faculty for the OTA program to date. A new pediatric instructor was hired for fall 2013 and another adjunct returned for a second year to teach one class. A new full time faculty member was hired for the start of the 2013-2014 academic year to serve as the fieldwork coordinator required by the revised Standards for Occupational Therapy Assistant Educational programs.

3. The OTA program filled its cap by the last week of February 2013 in order to notify students of their acceptance into the program. There were also >60 qualified alternates identified at that time who were numbered for entry if openings became available

4. General Education requirements for OTA students include Anatomy & Physiology I and II, Kinesiology, Intro to Psychology, English Composition I, Technical Writing or Business Writing or a Literature course, History or Political Science course, Human Growth & Development, Microsoft Applications, and a humanities credit.

5. Enrollment has been slowly growing since the program started to take students in 1999. Enrollment numbers for the last few classes are:

Fall 2012	**Spring 2013**
24 first year students enrolled	24 enrolled start of spring semester (Class of 2014)
23 second year students enrolled	21 enrolled start of spring semester (Class of 2013)
47 enrolled midterm of fall 2012	45 enrolled start of spring 2013

Fall 2013	**Spring 2014**
24 first year students enrolled	23 enrolled start of spring semester (Class of 2015)
24 second year students enrolled	24 enrolled start of spring semester (Class of 2014)
48 enrolled midterm of fall 2013	47 enrolled start of spring 2014

2 second year students returned to program in fall 2013 after childbirth during spring 2013 semester.

6. The program currently accepts 24 students each fall. It is limited by the number of fieldwork spaces available in the local community.

7. For the 2013-2014 academic year, there are 2 full time faculty - program coordinator Francie Woods and fieldwork coordinator Courtney Barrett. There are 2 adjuncts to teach classes that the program and fieldwork coordinator do not have experience. Trisha Taylor, OTR taught the pediatric class and labs (OTA 204/214) and supervised

level 2 fieldwork practicums (OTA 210/211) and OTA 298 Capstone class. Sue Wacker, COTA, taught OTA 209 Health Occupations Seminar.
Courtney Barrett, OTR, taught the adult physical dysfunction class and labs (OTA 203/213), both sections of OTA 218 Adaptive Living Skills, Health & Disease lecture and labs (OTA 207/217), OTA 298 Capstone Class and supervised level 2 fieldwork practicums (OTA 210/211).

8. Release time of 4 credit hours per fall and spring semester are granted for program coordination responsibilities. Francie also had 4 credit hours for fall 2013 as the fieldwork coordinator since Courtney was just beginning her teaching responsibilities and was not expected to serve in this capacity until spring semester. Courtney was granted 4 credit hours for the spring semester for fieldwork coordination responsibilities.

9. 56% of the graduates who responded to the graduate survey had jobs as occupational therapy assistants in a variety of treatment settings. 7 of the 14 respondents were unable to find full time employment in the St. Louis area. 5 of 14 left the St. Louis area in order to obtain full time employment.

VII PROGRAM SUMMATION COMMENTS

In 2013-2014, we met 5 of 7 or 71% of our program goals. The goal for passing the WorkKeys Assessment tests is discontinued and will no longer be reported.

The job market for occupational therapy assistants remains very competitive and restricted for full time positions with benefits available in the metropolitan St. Louis area. A number of graduates have reported difficulty in finding full time employment within the metropolitan area and took jobs outside of St. Louis and Missouri in order to obtain full time employment.

The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) changed the way it reports program pass rates. It will no longer consider just first time test takers, but will look at pass rates within one year of graduation. NBCOT reviews pass rates within a calendar year (from January to December). If our graduates delay taking the exam, they may be grouped into another cohort group which is not representative of the graduating classes performance.

The need for additional clinical sites is an on-going concern within the St. Louis area. Clinical sites are reporting much more stringent requirements for productivity and express hesitation and unwillingness to take students because of these pressures. The program has tried to find sites that are located further from the school which requires students to drive for longer periods of time, but even these are difficult to acquire at the times needed for the rotations to take place.

In conclusion, the SCC Occupational Therapy Assistant Program meets its overall objective to educate competent graduates who are prepared for entry level practice in a variety of treatment settings by meeting and addressing issues in its program assessment goals.

Overall, the St. Charles Community College OTA program is well aligned with the mission and vision of the college in providing personal and professional growth opportunities that produce competent and ethical practitioners. The program continues to work towards building partnerships in the community with various clinical sites and facilities to provide a diverse practice and learning environment.