

Statement of Philosophy

The Occupational Therapy academic program at Davenport University is founded on the Philosophical Base of Occupational Therapy that defines occupations as “activities that bring meaning to the daily lives of individual, families, communities, and populations and enables them to participate in society (AOTA, 2017). Occupational therapy is based on the belief that individuals have an innate need and right to engage in meaningful occupations and that participation in these occupations is a determinant to health for individuals, families, communities, and populations. Occupations occur in context throughout the lifespan. This participation in meaningful occupations throughout the lifespan leads to occupational adaptations that facilitate well-being and quality of life.

Fundamental Beliefs About Humans

Consistent with the Philosophical Base of Occupational Therapy (2017), the Philosophy of Occupational Therapy Education (AOTA, 2018) emphasizes the view of humans as occupational beings, occupation as health determinant, and participation in occupations as a fundamental human right but this official document specifically centers on beliefs about knowledge, learning and teaching. The philosophy of occupational therapy education believes that education (learning) is an ongoing process that shapes the occupational therapy student, their professional identity and their professional skills.

Humans are occupational beings with an innate drive to engage in meaningful occupations across the lifespan. The Occupational Therapy Program at Davenport University is founded on the fundamental belief that for all humans, learning is facilitated by intrinsic motivation and by the teaching and learning environment (Orsini, Evans & Jerez, 2015). Educational programs that support intrinsic motivation embrace and facilitate student learning. For students who are intrinsically motivated, satisfaction is gained from setting learning and professional goals, self-evaluation and reflection. Students also gain satisfaction through participation in learning activities, successful completion of context-oriented assignments, and/or mastery of technical skills. Learning becomes a part of the natural educational environment and is fueled by student motivation rather than the drive for external rewards (Richlin, 2006). Being part of the learning environment is motivating in itself. The educational setting becomes a meaningful context for the students, influencing and facilitating their learning and performance. Richlin (2006) identified four factors essential for intrinsic motivation: success, curiosity, originality, and relationships.

The four factors identified by Richlin (2006) can be met within the structure of an occupational therapy education program. The Occupational Therapy Department at Davenport University:

- promotes success by building on prior knowledge and experience and by valuing student accomplishments;
- arouses curiosity by incorporating authentic clinical issues and experiential

- learning into the curriculum;
- facilitates originality by providing opportunities for critical reasoning, self-directed learning, and self-reflection; and
- encourages relationships by modeling therapeutic use of self, building therapeutic alliances, and establishing a collaborative and inclusive educational environment.

Meeting the motivational needs of students must occur in conjunction with expectations associated with goals for the educational experience.

Beliefs About How Humans Learn

Fundamentally, the Davenport University occupational therapy program reflects the philosophical base of the profession and the philosophy of occupational therapy education. The program believes that humans have an innate drive for occupation. The Occupational Therapy Department at Davenport University is an academic program focused on student learning and achievement and adopts the educational philosophies of humanism and constructivism. The philosophy encourages the program's curriculum design, course construction, and instructional approach reflect the belief that human learning is strongly influenced by intrinsic motivation to learn and that this motivation prompts the development of personal goals. Thus, motivational needs of students can be addressed through a thoughtfully constructed education program. The Occupational Therapy Program's teaching approach is founded on a hierarchical structure that builds on prior knowledge and guides students forward and upward through introduction, reinforcement, and mastery of concepts. This approach supports developmental growth in critical thinking, professional judgement and integration of core concepts of the profession. Implementation strategies include active engagement in classroom instruction, experiential learning, self-directed study, and self-reflection. This approach promotes habits of lifelong learning. The program aims to provide practice-based education that is knowledge-driven and prepares students to be team-oriented and client-centered clinicians who incorporate principles of human occupation into their practice.