Program of Excellence Annual Report
Department of Occupational Therapy
Colorado State University

Submitted by:
Karen C. Spencer, Ph.D., OTR, Project Director
spencer@cahs.colostate.edu
970-491-5016
and
Jodie Redditi Hanzlik, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, Professor and Head
Occupational Therapy Department
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523

Submitted to:
Karen Jonsson, Grants Manager
Colorado Commission on Higher Education
1380 Lawrence Street, Suite 1200
Denver, CO 80204-2059

October 31, 2002
Introduction

The Department of Occupational Therapy at Colorado State University was awarded a Program of Excellence Grant in 2001. With the tremendous support and recognition provided by the CCHE grant, the Department has launched major program enhancements that are shaping the very nature of occupational therapy (OT) education while also promoting interdisciplinary learning opportunities for our students and OT professionals across Colorado.

Grant activities are focused in two related areas: building excellence in OT education, and promoting interaction and collaboration between the University, practicing occupational therapists, and other professionals on health and education-related issues of statewide importance.

The following annual report is divided into three sections. First, a short explanation of occupational therapy is provided -- a profession rich with opportunities and interesting challenges. Second, readers will find an extensive listing of Program of Excellence accomplishments for 2001-02. In some cases, photos are provided to further illustrate accomplishments. Third and last, is a brief description of on-going fund raising activities to provide additional support for CCHE Program of Excellence initiatives.

What is occupational therapy?

Occupational Therapists, OTs, focus on helping people of all ages DO the things that are important or necessary in their everyday lives. The term we use for this is occupation. OTs believe that people, by nature, are occupational beings who generally value their independence and self-sufficiency. When an illness or disability is present, the performance of everyday occupations can be significantly impacted and an occupational therapist may become a key member of the service team.

How do occupational therapists (OTs) help others? An OT may …

• …help a person with severe arthritis learn to open containers and cook using adaptive devices;
• … teach a college student who has lost an arm how to use a one-handed keyboard for word processing;
• … work with an elderly gentleman to identify and eliminate safety hazards in his home so his wife can return from the hospital and minimize her risk of falling;
• … teach the parent of a teenager with disabilities how to support her son’s learning of time management skills so that he can get to his new part-time job;
• … collaborate with a teacher to introduce adapted software to a student with disabilities so the student can successfully complete class assignments;
• … teach a mother how to play and interact with her new baby who has congenital disabilities.

OTs are problem-solvers who understand the potential effects of injury or disability on everyday life. OTs work with people to overcome challenges so they can participate in the occupations they find important or necessary.
Accomplishments

I. Program Area: Building Excellence in Occupational Therapy Education (curricular initiative).

I.A. Instructional and Assistive Technology: During the 2001-2002 project year, significant effort focused on building the Department’s capacity to use state-of-the-art instructional technology for teaching and learning. A parallel focus has been on expanding opportunities for OT faculty and students to learn about and work with a wide range of assistive technologies.

Instructional technology, as used at CSU, includes the strategic application of computer-assisted teaching and learning tools and strategies to expand university student access to, and use of a wide variety of on-line resources. Assistive technology, as used by occupational therapists, has been termed the “great equalizer.” It enables people to participate in multiple activities despite the effects of disability. Assistive technology includes both low tech items that increase human performance (e.g. adapted jar openers, ergonomically designed hand tools, carefully located grab bars) as well as very high tech items. A “high tech” example of assistive technology would include teaching a young woman with total body paralysis how to use a mouth-controlled switch system to independently operate her wheelchair, a computer, and other household appliances.

Accomplishment I.A.1 With CCHE funding, a full-time instructional designer was hired to work in four interrelated areas: building the underlying technology infrastructure needed to support the Department’s use of instructional technology; second, building the skills of OT faculty who are using new computer technology to teach and enhance courses; third, teaching and supporting OT students who are becoming competent users of on-line learning tools and resources; and last, supporting the Department’s outreach efforts via the World Wide Web.

Accomplishment I.A.2 Seven OT courses now incorporate extensive on-line resources that support and enhance student learning (previously, only 2 courses included any on-line features). Initial student feedback suggests that their learning has been very positively affected by the convenient on-line availability of course-related information (discussion forums, on-line quizzing, videos, research articles, course assignments, study guides, etc).

Accomplishment I.A.3 CCHE funds combined with Department funds supported the installation of a wireless computing network throughout the OT building. This network allows students access to web-based resources and course information anywhere in the OT building.

Accomplishment I.A.4 14 wireless laptop computers have been purchased and made available for student check-out within the OT building. A variety of class-related resources plus specialized software have been loaded on the laptops for
OT class activities and assignments.

Accomplishment I.A.5 Two multimedia work stations have been set up to support faculty and students with the development of state-of-the-art presentations, on-line delivery of information in existing courses, and the future development of distance courses. Teaching and learning in occupational therapy is greatly enhanced when instructors are able to bring the experiences and opinions of clients and OT professionals into the classroom. We can now accomplish this through the creation of digital video on CD-ROM and DVD using this new equipment and software. In addition, we are creating interactive animations to support the study of biomechanics, and we have begun a new practice of publishing student research, including final poster presentations, on CD-ROM.

Accomplishment I.A.6 Dedicated student computing areas will soon be available (fall 2003) in several locations throughout the OT building. Rather than creating a single dedicated student computer lab as originally proposed, decentralized computing in multiple locations will most effectively optimize student learning and outreach to a variety of campus and community audiences. Planned enhancements include a new “cyber area” that will support groups of students working together and using on-line resources to complete class projects; improved graduate student workspace with computing to facilitate their roles as teaching and research assistants to faculty; and enhanced OT classrooms that facilitate student use of on-line resources during in-class learning activities. Until the planned student computing areas are fully operational in fall 2003, alternate space has been made available to support student computing.
Accomplishment I.A.7  The Department’s existing Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC) in cooperation with the CCHE grant, has been re-designed to support much expanded use by CSU students and faculty. The ATRC will continue to specialize in “adapted computing” which allows people with visual, physical, or cognitive disabilities to effectively use computers for a variety of purposes. The ATRC space will be significantly enlarged (summer 2003) to accommodate CSU students from across campus who have disabilities, OT graduate students, and CSU faculty who are interested in exploring and trying out available assistive technologies designed to help people overcome the effects of a disability.

Accomplishment I.A.8  To address the Department’s need to provide OT students with the opportunity to explore and use a variety of assistive technologies (in addition to adapted computing), a variety of improvements are currently being designed in and around the OT building. During the summer of 2003, first floor OT classrooms and an adjacent “adapted” garden will be developed as teaching/learning labs that resemble “real life” living, work, and recreation spaces. These spaces will be equipped with low and high tech adaptive and assistive features. A visitor to these labs may be surprised to find functional kitchen, bath, work, play, and garden areas. These living/working areas will support a wide range of daily occupations that are frequently impacted when a person has a disability. Working within these realistic environments, OT students will have the opportunity to problem-solve and try out different solutions that enable people with disabilities to perform needed or wanted activities. Bringing “real life” into the classroom setting also allows faculty and students to link research with practice to determine what sorts of OT interventions really work. The enhanced teaching/learning areas in the OT building will
also be opened to community members including professionals from other
disciplines, people who have disabilities and their caregivers, and the general
public interested in exploring how best to overcome barriers in and around their
homes and workplaces. By opening the lab areas to the community, OT
students will gain needed experience working with a variety of audiences to
address individual performance problems or needs.

I.B. Fieldwork for OT students: All students enrolled in the OT program are
required (according to national OT accreditation standards) to complete coursework
plus extensive fieldwork prior to sitting for a national certification exam. The
fieldwork portion of the program is very important and allows students to “apprentice”
with experienced OT practitioners prior to finding employment as occupational
therapists. Since most OT fieldwork occurs off campus, it can be difficult for OT
faculty to adequately support students (and their fieldwork supervisors) at a
distance. Furthermore, capturing on-going input from the fieldwork sites and
bringing this back to the Department at CSU has been a challenge. With CCHE
support, the establishment of a continuous feedback loop using web-based
technology is now viewed as a powerful tool for on-going program improvement. To
address these issues and to strengthen our overall OT program, a number of CCHE
supported activities have been undertaken as follows:

Accomplishment I.B.1 The Department’s fieldwork seminar course has been
significantly enhanced and expanded over the past year. On-campus students
enrolled in fieldwork/seminar complete 40 hours of supervised fieldwork in a
targeted setting AND attend a weekly 2-hour seminar. Through the fieldwork
seminar experience, students are able to directly link their on-campus
coursework with practice in a targeted service setting. The OT services delivered
by the OT students, OT faculty, and the on-site OT are continuously examined in
light of current research. The structure of the fieldwork seminars allows OT
faculty members to have on-going interactions with
other OTs in the field and
professionals from a variety
of disciplines. Over the
past year, the
fieldwork/seminar offerings
have grown from three
different practice settings to
five. On a pilot basis, one
fieldwork seminar course
has developed a website to
allow involved students,
faculty, and field-based
OTs to interact on-line and
to share information
(research articles, practice
guidelines, feedback,
learning activities, etc).
Accomplishment I.B.2  The recent availability of web-based instructional technology is significantly impacting how the Department thinks about and supports students who are completing their required six months of full-time internship that occurs after students complete their on-campus coursework. Interning OT students can be found working throughout the US and internationally. With CCHE support, we are now piloting web-based strategies to connect interning CSU students and their OT supervisors with each other and with OT faculty and students at CSU. For the first time, discussions related to critical practice issues and concerns can occur on-line and include different OT practice settings around the world and the University without the constraints imposed by geographic distance. One strategy being piloted is the sharing of “anonymous case-studies” where OT students describe situations they encounter during their internship then use the website for discussion around evidence-based practice issues, ethics, and OT intervention ideas.

I.C. Interdisciplinary Training and Leadership Development: A focus of the CCHE project has been the expansion of interdisciplinary connections on campus and in the field. Building on interdisciplinary efforts, project activities are also targeting the preparation of OTs as leaders in the field. These on-going activities are receiving much attention during the 2002/03 project year.

Accomplishment I.C.1 In May 2002, OT faculty members participated in a multiple day retreat with faculty from other Units within CSU’s College of Applied Human Sciences to explore opportunities for interdisciplinary interaction and collaboration. A proposal was generated at the retreat to consider strategies for the interdisciplinary preparation of professionals (teachers, administrators, social workers, counselors, occupational therapists) who find employment in public schools. With support from the CCHE grant, Colorado State’s School of Education, Department of Occupational Therapy, and School of Social Work are now working together to design comprehensive, interdisciplinary training options for our students, including a focus on leadership development.
II. **Program Area: Development of Interdisciplinary Opportunities to Advance the field of Occupational Therapy (Interdisciplinary/Professional Initiative)**

II.A. Visiting Scholars and Interdisciplinary Networking: With CCHE support, the Department of Occupational Therapy has embarked on a new tradition of bringing scholars to the area to interact with students and faculty and to discuss issues of local, regional, and national importance. These scholars also bring important ideas from their respective disciplines (medicine, developmental psychology, management and leadership) that help the Department continue to advance as a Program of Excellence.

**Accomplishment II.A.1** With CCHE support, the Department co-sponsored the 2001 and 2002 Annual Conference of the Occupational Therapy Association of Colorado and helped bring nationally known speakers to these conferences. The speakers shared valuable perspectives related to evidence-based practice, child development, and leadership. OT students, faculty, and OT practitioners from around Colorado were able to participate in these presentations thus promoting professional development on many levels.

**Accomplishment II.A.2** In April 2002, The *First Annual Occupational Therapy Research Symposium* was held. This on-campus event included student presentations of research that were judged for quality and significance. Research presentations were followed by a warmly received keynote presentation by Dr. Claudia Osborn, author of “*Over My Head: A Doctor’s Own Story of Head Injury from the Inside Looking Out*.”

Dr. Lucy Jane Miller, keynote presenter on evidence-based practice at the 2002 Conference of the Occupational Therapy Association Colorado.

OT faculty, students, and occupational therapists from the community attending student research presentations at the 2002 Research Symposium.
included current and prospective OT students, OT faculty, CSU faculty and administrators from across campus, and OT practitioners from the region who were invited as special guests.

Accomplishment II.A.3 The scheduled construction (spring 2003) of the adapted garden adjacent to the OT building represents a new collaboration between CSU's Departments of Occupational Therapy and Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, as well as a variety of community stakeholders. CSU students from multiple disciplines along with faculty and community advisors have designed the garden to accommodate users of all ages and abilities and to showcase smart design concepts. The garden will serve as a teaching/learning lab for students in occupational therapy, landscape design, horticulture, and horticulture therapy. Additionally, it will serve as a resource to community members, and human service professionals interested in creating accessible and functional out-of-door areas.

Matching Funds

1. CCHE Program of Excellence funds were matched in 2001-2002 with significant contributions from the Occupational Therapy Department to enhance the building's technological infrastructure needed to support CCHE Program of Excellence initiatives.

2. In 2001-2002, an interdisciplinary team of faculty submitted a multi-year proposal to the US Department of Education to build upon the Department's Assistive Technology and Community outreach programs. While the proposal received perfect scores from US Department of Education raters, unfortunately it was not awarded. This proposal will be resubmitted in 2002-2003.

3. An interdisciplinary training proposal involving CSU's Department of OT and School of Education is in the early stages of development with plans to submit to CSU’s Academic Enrichment Program (AEP). However, due to recent budget reductions at the University, the AEP completion has been placed on temporary hold. The interdisciplinary proposal writing team will reconvene when AEP funding once again becomes available.
4. The University’s Development Office is currently assisting the CCHE project staff to solicit foundation and business contributions towards some of the planned improvements in teaching and learning areas in and around the OT building.

5. The Department’s current focus for alumni giving is now encouraging private contributions towards state-of-the-art improvements in the OT lab areas.

6. As stated in the original CCHE proposal, grant writing was to become a project focus during years four and five. This timeline has been proactively moved up to allow for the development of funding sources that can extend Program of Excellence initiatives beyond the original CCHE grant period.

Thank you for reviewing this annual report. If you have further questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Karen Spencer, Project Director at spencer@cahs.colostate.edu or by calling 970-491-5016.