Zooming Through the Fall Semester: CAMPUS and BU Student Collaboration

By Sharon McGrath (OTR/L, BU pp-OTD ’21) and Minji Lee (BU OTD ’23)

Sharon McGrath has over 25 years of experience as an occupational therapist. In 2019, she decided to return to school to obtain her doctoral degree at BU’s Post-Professional OTD Program. Sharon’s doctoral project focuses on creating a post-secondary life-skills program on a college campus for students, ages 18-22. She continues the story in her own words:

I have been working on creating the “College Access Maximizing Participation for Us” (CAMPUS) Program. The CAMPUS Program addresses secondary, at risk, students in a post-secondary life skills transition program. This is a preventative program at the client-centered level to provide education and hands-on learning opportunities in vocational training, activities of daily living (ADLs), instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), social skills, and community awareness. The purpose of this health and wellness program is to educate students about increasing their independence in everyday occupations.

Despite these intentions, Covid-19 turned life upside down for everyone and everything, including my doctoral project. How are you supposed to run a hands-on life skills program remotely and still make effective progress? The answer: collaborate with your BU faculty advisor and fellow OT students.

The start of the new school year was tricky. Our post-secondary program needed to work remotely for part of the school week. Dr. Karen Jacobs suggested a Zoom class with her entry-level OTD-1 students and my post-secondary students. The results were a weekly zoom meeting between the two groups to build social skills through conversations, on-line group games, and leisure activities such as listening to music and cooking.

Students Leading the Way

Fall 2020 has been unlike any other semester. Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, faculty and students have maintained resilience and optimism in adapting to hybrid learning. The articles presented here are hallmarks of how we can continue to promote occupational therapy, even while living and learning through difficult times.
The first-year BU-OTD and CAMPUS students met for the first time in late September. What was first a chaotic scene of echoes and forced mutes soon turned into enthusiastic one-hour sessions that both groups looked forward to on a weekly basis. In Zoom breakout rooms there were three to five BU students for every one of my post-secondary students. In each class my students were able to talk about their likes and interests and meet students from all over the country. One female student said, "I love activity class because we listen to One Direction and talk about fashion!". Another male student said, "I liked making nachos. It was like watching the cooking shows on TV!".

It has also been a memorable way for first-year OTD students to practice building therapeutic relationships with new clients, using virtual meetings for Telehealth purposes, and to apply their learned classroom knowledge in the real world. BU students created infographics for Backpack Awareness Day on September 16. CAMPUS students watched BU students prepare vegetarian whole-grain nachos on their Zoom screens. These two groups of students have been able to have meaningful interactions with people they may not have met in "normal" circumstances. Remote learning has its pros and cons, but it is able to bring people together in ways that were never before possible. The creative collaboration between CAMPUS and BU students to participate in meaningful occupations together is just one example of this.

**Virtual Halloween Walk for Shriners Hospital for Children-Boston**

*By Hannah Gottfried (BU OTD ’23)*

This semester, the majority of the OTD-1 students participated in a virtual Halloween fundraiser to raise awareness and donations for Shriners Hospital for Children-Boston. With all the chaos going on in the world right now, I felt it was important that our cohort get involved in something where we could make change instead of just discussing it in class. When this opportunity was presented to me, I was excited about getting the other first year OTD students involved in something I was passionate about. Originally, I was unsure of how many people would even join, but more than half of the cohort participated! All proceeds from the walk went towards supporting and advancing world-class pediatric acute burn care, reconstructive plastic surgery, and cleft lip and palate care, regardless of the family’s ability to pay.

BU OTD-1 students raised $1,363 for the Boston Shriners Virtual Haunted Walk, exceeding their initial goal and contributing to a total of $203,550 raised for pediatric patients in critical need of health care.

We were excited to have the opportunity to be included in a great event that makes a difference for so many children and their families. We were able to discuss the event in our classes, and one of our professors, Anne Escher, donated to our page. It was wonderful to have the support of our program’s faculty. It was amazing to me how many people from our cohort and department wanted to contribute, and I hope we can continue to get involved in events like this throughout our time in the OTD program.

To find out more information, visit our team page: [https://donate.lovetotherescue.org/team/321218](https://donate.lovetotherescue.org/team/321218)

To read patient stories, visit the following link: [https://www.shrinershospitalsforchildren.org/boston/news-and-events](https://www.shrinershospitalsforchildren.org/boston/news-and-events)
The projects featured represent how BU-OTD students have applied their classroom knowledge into research and clinical settings. The creativity, scholarship, and leadership modeled by these Sargent College graduates are essential qualities of occupational therapists we strive to be.

Measuring Community Integration after Spinal Cord Injury
By Kim Greenberg, OTD, OTR/L

I completed my capstone project with Empower Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) under the mentorship of Kelly Spellman, MS, OTR and Anne Escher, OTD, OTR. Empower SCI is a non-profit organization that provides opportunities for rehabilitation, growth, and empowerment for community-dwelling adolescents and adults with SCI. The goal of my project was to assess how Empower SCI captures and measures change in its programming, research and pilot a new assessment measure relevant to community reintegration, and complete quantitative and qualitative case studies with Empower SCI 2020 participants to demonstrate program effectiveness.

I used the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health and Middleton and Craig’s SCI Adjustment Model to define key constructs related to community reintegration. These constructs were compared with qualitative data from 2018 participants to determine assessment measures relevant to Empower SCI. I also piloted a new assessment, the SCI-QOL Resilience SF, with two participants. To summarize my findings, I analyzed the assessment, environmental, and participant factors relevant to all outcome measures to recommend their continued, discontinued, or modified use at Empower SCI. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I completed my entire capstone virtually.

Learning how therapies can be delivered using peer models with telehealth opened my eyes to new and creative ways of service delivery. I plan to continue piloting the new assessment measure in future years with Empower SCI during in-person programming to improve data collection, with an overall goal to advocate for increased financial coverage for community-based rehabilitation for individuals with spinal cord injuries.

Occupational Therapy in Primary Care: Establishing a Role for Occupational Therapy in Diabetes Self-Management
By Gina Yoon, OTD, OTR/L

The primary objective of my doctoral capstone project was to explore and establish a role for occupational therapy (OT) practitioners in diabetes self-management at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. This was accomplished by advocating for OT through disseminating information about the scope of OT practice in diabetes self-management, understanding the role of primary care practitioners and service delivery at Cedars-Sinai, and garnering interest from stakeholders of a diabetes self-management service led by OT practitioners for adults and older adults with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM).

A needs assessment and literature search was completed to incorporate client-centered, occupation-focused, evidence-based, and theory-driven diabetes management interventions. Findings were adapted to meet the needs of the clients served at Cedars-Sinai and staff. The needs assessment revealed a need for OT services to address lifestyle changes in order to establish healthy habits and routines for individuals struggling to maintain and manage their diabetes. To address this gap in service delivery, OT practitioners and other professionals (e.g. primary care practitioners, dietitian/ nutritionists, pharmacists, nurses, etc.) were educated on the scope of OT as well as OT interventions for the target population to encourage collaboration and referrals.

After delivering a presentation through video conference, attendees were provided a link to a survey. Analysis of the survey indicated greater understanding of OT as a profession and willingness to refer patients with T2DM to OT. Respondents also attributed greater importance to OT. Materials were created and provided to staff at Cedars-Sinai to implement recommendations, which consisted of continued education of OT practitioner’s roles in diabetes self-management and OT practitioner training in diabetes education. Increased referrals to OT for clients with T2DM, positive client report, and clinical data can warrant further integration of our profession into primary care.
Sargent College News

Sargent College welcomes two faculty members to the Department of Occupational Therapy: Tatiana Pontes and Pedro Almeida. Their cross-cultural studies, research, and teaching have helped students adopt new perspectives in their OT framework. Though they are still in Canada for the time being, we hope to soon welcome them to our Sargent College campus.

Faculty Spotlight: Tatiana Pontes

Tatiana Pontes’ extensive career covers everything from community dwelling older adults to pediatrics. During her time as an undergraduate student she found her passion for research, specifically looking at the development of preterm babies. While completing her PhD in Child and Adolescent health, her research focused on the impact of low birth weight on development of school age children. This led her to further investigate the impact of environment and socioeconomic status on development. Although it was difficult to obtain funding for research at the time, Tatiana was able to conduct numerous studies and become a pioneer in the field.

Tatiana is passionate about occupational justice and uses an occupational lens when conducting assessments, interventions and research. This is seen through her work and how she approaches education. Over the years, she has won numerous awards including the Teaching Award and the Excellence in Research Award from the University of Brasilia and the Merit of Honor from the Brasilia Deputy Chambers.

Recently she has been working with researchers in the U.S, Brazil, and Canada to develop a measure to capture the development of children’s occupational repertoire. Not much is known about what children should be able to do after reaching developmental milestones, especially in terms of occupations. For example, participation in group sports or mealt ime routines may look different depending on culture but they are similar in their core aspects. Tatiana and her colleagues aim to capture “universal” occupations for children in a way that is less culturally influenced. Creating an assessment that takes this into account can provide clinicians with more accurate information about whether their client may need extra support. As occupational therapy continues to expand, it is important that assessments reflect the increased diversity of the populations served.

“Tatiana and her colleagues aim to capture ‘universal’ occupations for children in a way that is less culturally influenced.”

When she is not busy with her jobs and research, Tatiana enjoys going for walks, taking naps, and playing with her kids. Her favorite occupation is cooking because it reminds her of home. Living far from Brazil can be challenging; however, cooking has given Tatiana the ability to stay connected with her family.

Faculty Spotlight: Pedro Almeida

I started my career as a clinician immediately after graduating from OT school – literally the following day. I got my bachelor’s in OT from the Federal University of Sao Carlos, in Brazil. After that, I worked full-time with clients living with neuromuscular conditions, mostly Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy or Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, while simultaneously pursuing my hand therapy specialization.
After two intense years of clinical practice, I decided to go back to the university to answer some of the questions I had while seeing my clients. Unlike the US and Canada, OT school in most South American countries is a 4 to 5-year endeavor, with master’s and doctoral-level studies generally pursued after that only by people planning to follow an academic career.

A couple of months after finishing my master’s degree, I moved to the country’s capital to join the University of Brasilia’s OT department as a faculty member while also starting my Ph.D. Through teaching, service or research, the university hospital was always my favorite place to be. Over there, I worked closely with the Brazilian Society of Rheumatology, developing guidelines and best practice protocols for clients living with rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus. These collaborations resulted in some publications, but most importantly, they helped clients and allowed OT students to learn from hands-on experiences in outpatient clinics and acute care units.

In my research, I use movement analysis tools as surface electromyography and kinematic analysis to understand changes in occupational performance caused by acute and chronic conditions affecting the upper extremity, while also looking for occupation-based strategies to improve clients’ engagement in meaningful occupations. Apart from work, I enjoy printing things on a 3D printer, playing old video games, and painting Dungeon and Dragons miniatures (I am still pretty bad at it, but there has been some improvement). Above all, I love spending time with my kids, Francisco and Olivia.

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MAOT Conference 2020: Highlights and Student Reflections
By Hannah Mogavero (BU OTD ’23) and Minji Lee (BU OTD ’23)

This year’s Massachusetts Association of Occupational Therapy (MAOT) Conference was held virtually via Zoom. Despite the unprecedented circumstances surrounding Covid-19, the digital method of imparting information and hosting discussion groups increased participation from professionals in the OT field across the country. A number of BU-OT faculty and students hosted webinars and discussions for the MAOT participants. Jennifer Kaldenberg’s presentation provided guidance for clinicians and educators on assisting students with innovative doctoral capstone projects. Karen Duddy, Karen Jacobs, Nancy Doyle, and Liat Gafni Lachter, faculty members of the BU-post professional OTD (pp-OTD) program, and Dianna Ullrich and Suzanne Wallace, pp-OTD students, led a presentation on how pp-OTDs can advance OT education in their home countries, start clinics and programs in their specialty fields, and take on innovative leadership roles.

Seven BU-OTD students received the Linda Duncombe Professional Development Award for Students. This award was established to celebrate Linda Duncombe, a long-time faculty member in the BU OT department, who passed
away in 2020. Professor Duncombe taught courses such as Mental Health in OT, Group Leadership, and was the Level II Fieldwork Coordinator for over 34 years. She was an advocate for mental health education and for student participation in professional development activities such as attendance of the MAOT Conference. In the years to come, a faculty-student task group will develop criteria to select future awardees of this award.

The title of this year’s conference, “Embracing our Identity in a Changing Climate”, is connected to a number of key concepts we have discussed in our classes about the changing sociopolitical climate of this year and how it relates to OT practice. Several BU-OTD students attended a presentation about awareness of cultural differences and culturally responsive care entitled “Practitioners’ awareness of cultural differences; Culturally responsive care.” The presenters included Sepanta Yousefian, a post professional OTD student at Tufts University, as well as Mary Alicia Barnes, a faculty member at the Tufts University Department of Occupational Therapy.

The presentation was focused on the difference between cultural competency and cultural humility. While cultural competency emphasizes acquiring knowledge about cultures, cultural humility is a constant learning process. Yousefian emphasized that an individual can never truly understand what it means to be a part of a cultural group they are not a member of, and pushed us to go beyond cultural competence. Yousefian encouraged us to reflect on dominant and nondominant group identities and the privileges that accompany the intersections of these identities. She then explained that a part of cultural humility is recognizing the power imbalance that exists between health care professionals and their clients.

“Cultural humility requires deep and continuous self-reflection as well as recognition of how one’s own cultural biases are aligned with dominant cultural narratives.”

~Joy Agner

Students from the OTD-1 cohort who attended the MAOT Conference this year agreed that this presentation led to the crucial realization that cultural humility can be applied to the concept of occupational justice, which has been a salient topic in this semester’s curriculum. When looking to apply the concept of occupational justice to our professional scope, we must first practice cultural humility in admitting that we can never truly comprehend the full context of an individual’s cultural background. However, we can do our best to respect each other’s perspectives, listen to each other’s stories, and extend empathy for each other’s experiences.

Students are planning to utilize additional recordings of presentations from the MAOT conference throughout the time between semesters. We hope these resources will help further engage us in conversations that uphold cultural humility in our individual interactions as we move forth in our curriculum and into the professional world.

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**Tips for Covid-Learning**

The Department of Occupational Therapy has adopted a hybrid teaching and learning model this semester. Despite these challenging times, there are ways to make the most out of our circumstances. From creating ergonomic-friendly workstations at home to exploring meditation through digital apps, we can stay active, engaged, and mindful in our meaningful occupations.

**Make Work-from-Home Work for You: Ergonomics Strategies for a Healthy Lifestyle**

Though ergonomics has been around since the mid-19th century, our understanding of its capacity to promote healthy living and working environments has increased dramatically this year. Ergonomics refers to how people interact with and arrange objects in their environment to promote an efficient work space. In addition to being an occupational therapist and clinical professor, Karen Jacobs is a board certified professional ergonomist (CPE). She offers some ergonomic tips on how to keep our bodies engaged as we adapt our work spaces for the home environment.

- Head, neck, and back: Whenever possible, make sure your neck is level with the computer screen, not tilted up or down. Move your chair as close as possible to your desk, and keep a pillow between your back and chair to prevent yourself from slouching. If sitting on a couch or a bed, roll up a towel and place it at the base of your spine for extra support.
- Eyes: Keep your computer screen perpendicular to a window so that outside glare is not causing extra strain on the eyes. Whenever possible, have
your computer screen situated at least one arm’s length away.

- Hands and wrists: Put some padding, such as a folded washcloth, on the hard edges of your desk. Float your hands above the keyboard when typing.
- Feet: Keep your feet flat on the floor; if they do not touch the floor, try using a yoga block or a sturdy box to rest your feet on while sitting in your chair.

“Ergonomics refers to how people interact with and arrange objects in their environment to promote an efficient work space.”

Most importantly, Karen Jacobs encourages her students to take a screen and stretch break every 30 minutes. Whether you are working from a home office, a dorm room desk, or in a communal space, there are easy ergonomic ways to adjust your body and objects to this work environment to reduce body fatigue and promote work engagement.

You can find more ergonomic strategies on Karen’s BU blog at: http://blogs.bu.edu/kjacobs/

Karen Jacobs’ ergonomic arrangement for working remotely from one of the BU dormitories, Student Village 2.

Launched the Wellbeing Project to support the health and wellness of the BU community. One free resource that the Wellbeing Project offers for BU students is Headspace, a mindfulness and meditation app that accompanies its users through a variety of mind exercises at any time of day, for any type of mood. Topics that may be of importance to students are stress reduction, focus, reducing anxiety, managing finances, and sleep hygiene. To register for Headspace for free, simply log onto the app with your BU log-in and Kerberos password. Once registered, you can access all Headspace resources for as long as you are enrolled at Boston University.

Headspace and Kanopy

Here’s a new nighttime routine that many of us have adopted: after turning off the lights, we open up a meditation app on our smartphones and fall asleep to a soundtrack or story. This year, Boston University has

Kanopy is an on-demand streaming platform that offers over 30,000 documentaries, films, and TV shows, at no cost, to public libraries and universities, including Boston University. Simply log in to your BU library account and you will be redirected to the Kanopy website, where you can enroll as a member for free. Open up the “browse” list to find a diverse selection of movies, shows, and documentaries. Subjects such as ethnicity and identity, health and wellness, and mental health might be of special interest to BU-OT individuals.

Self-Care Resources: Headspace and Kanopy

To learn more about BU’s Wellbeing Project, visit this page: https://www.bu.edu/provost/wellbeingproject/
Connecting from Anywhere: A BU-OT Collaborative Project

Despite the unprecedented circumstances of 2020, the BU-OT community has maintained its passion and resilience. For this newsletter edition, the editors reached out to BU-OT students, faculty, and alumni and compiled a list of OT experiences this year as a means of offering collaborative support for each other amid and through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Boston University’s online post-professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program has matriculated 169 students since its inception 12 years ago. This year, the pp-OTD program consists of 92 students from five continents, each of them occupational therapy practitioners furthering their education to be global agents of change in the field of occupational therapy and beyond.

Occupational Therapy in Three Words

Where are you currently located?

What is one meaningful occupation you have engaged in during this Covid-19 season?

“One meaningful occupation I have engaged in during COVID-19 season is fighting for equal justice. I have advocated a lot for Black Lives Matter and other racial injustices globally.”

“Reading (non-school) books! I love getting away from my computer screen and reading purely for enjoyment.”

“We have been taking advantage of our beautiful campus and built a large vegetable garden from seeds!”

“I’ve established a weekly phone call date with each of my grandparents. Definitely more steady contact with family, which has been super heartwarming.”

“Cooking! While at my family’s home for the longest time since moving away for undergrad, I realized how meaningful I find cooking dinner to be. I was able to return to my routine of shopping at the local farmer’s market, plan meals with my mom and brother, try new recipes, and share food with my family.”

“Biking is a new occupation for me and one that has become important in giving me tranquility and peace. It has also become my new way of commuting to work!”

“I started watercolor painting after finding that it tapped into my creative side while also almost forcing me to relax due to having to concentrate and move slowly.”
“During COVID season, my family worked together to complete six 2,000-piece puzzles together. **Puzzle-making** has been one of our favorite co-occupations in addition to playing **card games.**”

“Before attending BU, I spent a lot of time with my **immediate family**, which we didn’t get to do a lot of before. It was a very positive experience during a very uncertain time.”

“Outdoor picnics with classmates.”

“With another occupational therapy colleague, we have been providing **complimentary webinars on telehealth**. Providing this knowledge and skills is meaningful to me, especially to **mentor others** to provide occupational therapy through telehealth technology.”

“Besides treating rehab patients recover from COVID, I was also able to find **meaning and flow in doing puzzles.**”

“I have really enjoyed **taking walks with my dog on these nice, autumn days**. I enjoy **exploring new areas in Boston** and **finding fun parks!**”

“There has been an up-leveling of my **home coffee making** skills, my **running** has improved and almost become enjoyable, and **family dog walks have reached a sacred status.**”

“**It took me a while to find that passion for OT** my first year. Now, in my hardest semester yet, I’m **constantly blown away by how powerful OT is** and all it has to offer.”

“Your colleagues are your best resource. Get to know them well and lean on them often.”

“Network and **reach out to current OT students** for guidance and advice. **There are so many alumni who are willing and eager to mentor!** Utilize these resources.”

“You’re learning even when you don’t realize it.”

“A **bottom up approach to intervention** is necessary in providing occupational justice for your future patients. By this I mean **the need for political and social advocacy in the profession.**”

“Find a mentor and be a mentor.”

“Your first job need not determine the rest of your career.”

“**Jump in! Take every opportunity for learning and enjoy the process!**”

“It is a long road and it seems impossible at times that you will ever break through. The truth is you will if you **make a plan, work hard to meet those deadlines**, and most importantly **HAVE FUN and LOVE your brilliant work!**”

“**BU-OTD is very similar to the “Whose Line is it Anyways” motto** – where the jokes are made up and the points don’t matter. The points don’t really matter. So relax, do your best, learn from feedback, and take a nap when you need it.”

“Don’t be afraid to speak your mind, reach out to others, and ask for help.”

“Take advantage of **unique research and community engagement opportunities** associated with OT.”

“Be open to opportunities! **Set audacious goals for yourself** both professionally and personally with short-term objectives to reach these goals.”

**What is one piece of advice you would offer to an OTD-1 student today?**

**OTD-1 students demonstrate their Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) after completing an OT526 lab session.**
“A good work-life balance now will inform your habits as a practicing occupational therapist.”

“Breathe, do your best, and reach out for support from your peers and professors. You have a lot of wonderful resources to help you be successful!”

“Make sure to make time for yourself and do things you enjoy outside of school!”

“Have a good idea of the direction and intent of your OTD project as you enter the program. Given that framework, you will learn something in each course that can be directly applied to your OTD project.”

“The content may feel overwhelming at times, or may not make sense within the learning context, but it ALL comes together in the end!”

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### Recent Faculty Publications and Presentations

#### Faculty Publications


Schaub, A., Stephan, G., Mueser, K.T., Martin, H., Elisabeth, R., Ulrich, G., Marketa, C., Rolf, E., Hans-Jürgen, M,


**Faculty Presentations**


Columbia University. Department of Occupational Therapy. New York, United States.

International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics conference on Telehealth. Brussels.

Plymouth University’s Occupational Therapy & Occupational Science Webinar series. Plymouth, UK.


Post-professional Doctoral Presentations, Virtual Conference. United States.


*Mote, J., Gonzalez, R., Gard, D. E., & Fulford, D. (2020, March). We should do this again sometime: The relationship between loneliness, positive affect, and depression in daily life, in The role of positive affect in depression: Relationships revealed across days, weeks, and months (Symposium), Anxiety and Depression Association of America, San Antonio, TX, United States.


Be an Advocate for OT Education

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- Provide a guest lecture
- Collaborate with faculty & students to identify research questions

**What BU can do for YOU:**

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*If you are interested in these opportunities, or would like to know more information, please contact ot@bu.edu.*

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**BU’s OT Student Run Newspaper**

*For student story submissions, please email: ot@bu.edu*