Occupational Therapy Masters Program Proposal

Introduction

The School of Nursing and Health Professions (NHP) seeks to start an Occupational Therapy Masters Degree Program. Common degree titles conferred are Masters of Occupational Therapy (MOT), Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT), and Master of Science (MS). Adding this Masters degree program contributes to Trinity’s strategic initiatives through Strategic Goal 1 Enrollment, Strategic Goal 3 Program Development, and Strategic Goal 8 Service to Students and Community.

Limited educational opportunities exist for District of Columbia and Greater Washington residents to pursue an occupational therapy degree as Howard University offers the only OT program within the District of Columbia while Towson University in Baltimore, Shenandoah University in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia offer the nearest occupational therapy degree programs. Trinity’s OT Masters Degree Program will add an educational glidepath that increases prospective students’ access to allied health professions while increasing Trinity’s service to the community, joining existing nursing, exercise science, and occupational therapy assistant graduates in the greater Washington workforce.

Statement of Need

Trinity healthcare professional education programs in nursing, exercise science, health science, and occupational therapy assistant provide opportunities for students to enter healthcare professional practice while making available a talented, locally based workforce for the Greater Washington Metro community. Occupational therapy is expected to grow over 30% through 20201 as baby boomers need help to deal with life changes associated with aging and more emphasis is placed on ‘aging in place’. Occupational Therapy career opportunities rank within the 10 most in demand healthcare careers over the next 10 years2. Demand for higher education degree attainment coincides with increased healthcare employment opportunities to meet societal needs. Desire for higher education degrees in healthcare fields ranks third behind the STEM fields and education.3

The need for more occupational therapists in the Greater Washington area is evident in the nearly 150 position announcements posted in DCJobs.com when inquiring within a 50 mile radius of Washington, DC. The 2011 Georgetown Regional Needs Analysis Report indicates institutions of higher education should “focus on occupations that offer both high wages and either high job growth rates or total job openings when identifying programs for expansion.” The U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Outlook Handbook indicates we can expect a 33% employment increase for occupational therapist from 2010-2020. (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>).

The lack of nearby occupational therapy degree programs and the expected community need for OT rehabilitative and habilitative services, combined with Trinity’s mission to serve the community make this educational program offering a logical next step in the development of the School of Nursing and Health Professions. Trinity’s OTA program currently has over 30 fieldwork agreements for students to complete Level I and Level II fieldwork. Six additional sites are currently unable to provide fieldwork placements due to inadequate staffing. Graduating qualified occupational therapists allows Trinity to contribute to filling these positions that can result in more patient care contact as well as enhanced fieldwork education.

Detailed Description of the Occupational Therapy Masters Degree Program

*Accreditation Timeline*

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| Letter of Intent Submitted to ACOTE | January , 2013 |
| Program Director Hire | Summer, 2014 |
| Candidacy Status Application Submitted with Application fee | January 15, 2015 |
| ACOTE action on Candidacy Application | April, 2015 |
| Students notified of acceptance into the Program | May 2015 |
| First OT Masters Degree Class Enrolled | August 2015 |
| Initial Report of Self-Study due | December 1, 2015 |
| ACOTE action on Initial Review | April 2016 |
| ACOTE Initial On-Site Evaluation | Spring-Summer, 2017 |
| First class begins Level II Fieldwork | May 2017 |
| ACOTE action on Report of On Site Evaluation – Accreditation Decision | Fall, 2017 |
| Commencement for Trinity’s first cohort of Occupational Therapy Masters Degree students | December 2017 |
| NBCOT Certification Examination | December 2017 – January 2018 |

*General Curriculum Plan*

The general occupational therapy masters degree curriculum plan involves 2.5 years of course work that culminates in 32 weeks of full-time fieldwork experiences. The program is expected to require 70-75 credits in addition to pre-requisite courses.

These courses may include:

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| **Pre-requisites** | |
| English Composition (Trinity equivalent ENGL 107) | Psychology (Trinity equivalent PSYC 101) |
| Math (Trinity equivalent MATH 108) | Child Psychology (Trinity equivalent PSYC 231) |
| Statistics (Trinity equivalent MATH 110) | Abnormal Psychology (Trinity equivalent PSYC 221 Psychopathology) |
| Anatomy & Physiology I and II | Sociology (Trinity equivalent SOCY 100) |
| Physics I and II |  |
|  | 37 pre-requisite credits |
| **OT Masters Degree Curriculum Sample Outline** | |
| *Fall* | *Spring* |
| *Fall* | *Spring Term 1* |
| *Spring, Term 2: Level II Fieldwork* | *Summer: Level II Fieldwork* |
| *Fall: Level II Fieldwork* | |
| Expected Graduation Date: December | |
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| **Some Suggested Course Content** | |
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| Foundations of Occupational Therapy | Functional Anatomy |
| Occupational Therapy Professional Issues (Ethics and Advocacy, Leadership, etc) | Neuroscience |
| Kinesiology | Physical Dysfunction |
| Research and Evidence-based Practice | Occupational Therapy Group Dynamics |
| Mental Health | Rehab Service Management |
| Pediatrics | Biomechanical Concepts in Occupational Therapy |
| Geriatrics | Masters Project |
| Fieldwork Level II – Final Summer Term | Fieldwork Level II – Final Fall semester |
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| \*All level II fieldwork will be full-time, completed during normal business hours | |
| \*\*Fieldwork I will be embedded in courses taken in the 2nd through 4th semesters | |
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The School of Nursing and Health Professions proposes offering the OT Masters program in a weekend, hybrid delivery format. Students would complete a significant part of the didactic work online with seminar and laboratory skills experiences conducted on campus in a weekend format. This program meets second career and working adult needs while expanding the applicant pool to residents in nearby Mid-Atlantic states.

Larger Trinity Context

Adding the Occupational Therapy Masters Degree Program to the existing School of Nursing and Health Professions curricular offerings enhances Trinity’s visibility in educating healthcare professionals to service the greater Washington, DC area while increasing access to allied health career programs for greater Washington residents. With the existing Nursing, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Exercise Science, and Health Science programs, the Occupational Therapy Masters Degree program development will contribute to Trinity’s Strategic Goals by adding enrollment and serving the community.

This proposal seeks to enlarge the School of Nursing and Health Professions by adding a graduate program for students interested in the helping healthcare professions while offering graduates from Trinity’s baccalaureate degree programs a glidepath by which to pursue graduate allied health education. The Occupational Therapy Masters Degree Program contributes to the School of Nursing and Health Professions ability to:

* Provide healthcare access opportunities to students from underrepresented groups in healthcare given that less than 15% of healthcare providers represent individuals of color.
* Educate students in multiple healthcare fields of interest to the local community thus contributing to Trinity’s mission by addressing social justice and inequality aspects of local, national, and global healthcare.
* Contribute to Trinity’s enrollment growth and vision for a new academic center.
* Educate students in various healthcare disciplines allowing Trinity to build interdisciplinary partnerships for education and community service options.

Clinical availability to meet demand

The OTA Program success in meeting fieldwork placement demand bodes well for the Occupational Therapy Program. These sites provide prospective fieldwork placements. Other sites such as National Rehabilitation Hospital Outpatient Centers and Veterans Administration Medical Center verbally committed to occupational therapy fieldwork despite not providing such experiences for OTA students. Their differentiation relates to employment practices where occupational therapists are hired whereas OTAs are not utilized in these facilities.

While the OT program may present competition for OTA fieldwork placements, offering the OT program in a weekend format and creatively developing 2:1 student: supervisor alternative fieldwork models may effectively address fieldwork education needs. A survey of community healthcare sites may need to be conducted to more concretely determine fieldwork placement support from the occupational therapy community.

Outcomes and Assessment

Success of the Occupational Therapy Masters Degree Program will be measured by:

1. Enrollment attainment of 70 students by Fall 2017
2. A 3 year 100% NBCOT examination pass rate within 12 months of graduation
3. ACOTE full accreditation status granted by December, 2017
4. Completion of OT program mechanisms for formative and summative outcomes assessment that address institutional and programmatic student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The School of Nursing and Heath Professions seeks to contribute to Trinity’s Strategic Goals by increasing enrollment through the development of a new educational program while building on existing undergraduate degree options. The Occupational Therapy Masters Degree Program provides an additional educational career path for existing undergraduate students while expanding allied healthcare educational opportunities for residents of the greater Washington area. The program will enroll new Trinity students and give Trinity baccalaureate degree holders another avenue for graduate healthcare education.

References

1. Occupational Outlook Handbook. United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. Accessed on March 5, 2014. Accessed at: <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>.

2. The Job Outlook for Occupational Therapy. American Occupational Therapy Association. Accessed on March 5, 2014. Accessed at: <http://www.aota.org/en/Education-Careers/Considering-OT-Career/JobOutlook.aspx>.

3. Healthcare Executive Summary. Carnevale, AP, Smith, N, Gulish, A, and Beach BH. Georgetown University Public Policy Institute. Accessed September, 2013. Accessed at: (<http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/Healthcare.ExecutiveSummary.090712.pdf>).