

PACE OT NEWSLETTER

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Created by the PTE Zeta Gamma Chapter Team



A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

It is an honor to continue to serve the Pace Occupational Therapy (OT) Department as a newly tenured associate professor. While a majority of the responsibilities associated with the role of department chair consist of managerial and administrative activities, I continue to engage in teaching various courses throughout our curriculum. These efforts have provided me with a front-seat view of the lived experiences, challenges and triumphs our students face on a daily basis.

Throughout the past year, our faculty have come together to implement curricular and pedagogical refinements, improvements, and innovations to assure our students are benefiting from a world-class educational experience in preparation for success in fieldwork, licensure, and ultimately a career as an occupational therapist. Part of this process has come from an increased understanding that success in the future lies in the 'here and now'. We must focus our efforts in the present moment, thoroughly immersed and engaged in the occupation of learning, exploring and creating. As a result of these efforts, our program continues to evolve into a world-class occupational therapy educational experience that will truly serve the future of the profession and the community.

John Damiao, PhD, MS, OTR/L

Associate professor and chair, OT Department



John Damiao, PhD OTR/L, department chair instructs students Marina Saad, Alexandria Glover, and Kate Bloss.

WHAT IS Pace OT?

Pace University's Occupational Therapy program offers a hybrid learning experience that prepares students for both traditional and non-traditional OT settings. Combining online learning with in-person classes two days per week, the program offers flexibility while maintaining a strong hands-on approach.

Pace OT emphasizes four core themes: evidence-based practice and scholarship, occupation-centered and client-centered approach, ethics and interprofessional practice, and innovation and technology. Over 28 months, students engage in both classroom learning and clinical fieldwork, equipping them with the skills needed for entry-level positions in OT.

The program encourages involvement in the local community and professional growth, offering students opportunities for inter-professional collaboration, networking, and advocacy for the OT profession.

SOTA @ Pace

Pace University's student-led chapter of the Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) nurtures connection and collaboration among students, faculty, and community members through meaningful interactions that have lasting impacts. While carrying out a mission that prioritizes the health and wellness of students, SOTA exists to promote the foundation of the organization that focuses on student advocacy, community service, fundraising, and professional development. Students fundraised \$800 to support disability self-advocates, Jon and Maudey, who traveled to the 2024 AOTA Conference to present along Galilee Damiao MS, OTR/L on "Experiences of Using Assisted Communication Among Individuals with Complex Communication Needs." As the year continues, SOTA members will be volunteering at Push to Walk's AccessAbility Day in Montvale, NJ to help clean equipment and engage in adaptive sports!



FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS



Jennifer Tokash, OTD, OTR/L, CBIS, CPAM, is receiving the New York State Occupational Therapy Association (NYSOTA) Merit Award for Service, being honored for outstanding contribution to the association and the betterment of the profession of occupational therapy. Congratulations Dr. Tokash!

We are excited to announce that **Supawadee Cindy Lee, PhD, MS, MA, OTR/L, SIPT**, associate professor has been awarded the Pace Scholarly Research funds to support her innovative research initiatives. This project aims to create interactive online ethics training modules for health professional students and evaluate their impact on students' ethical knowledge and decision-making skills.

The study will be conducted in two phases: the Focus Group Phase and the Implementation & Evaluation Phase. During the Focus Group Phase, Dr. Lee will collaborate with OT class of 2025 students Lena Kleinberg, Taylor Pandorf, and Elena Perez, who will serve as co-investigators. They will gather valuable insights from health professional students and practitioners regarding their current understanding of healthcare ethics and ethics education.

Congratulations to Dr. Lee and our student co-investigators! We look forward to seeing the impact of this research on health professional students and the broader healthcare community.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

HALI FOUNDATION



The Hali Foundation provides support groups to children housed in domestic violence shelters. These groups occur because of their Creative Arts Services Project, where children are receiving support to develop a sense of how their emotions are impacted by their context. Their mission is to “empower through the use of empirically-validated research and trauma-informed practices that promote healing, prevention, self-integration, and the potential for fully-realized lives.” Some of our Pace students have completed Level I Fieldwork at this site and are continuing previous research conducted on the effectiveness of this project under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Tokash and Dr. Alison Rebels.

FWE SPOTLIGHT

Many occupational therapy Level 1 fieldwork sites are traditional: students observe OTs doing OT. However, the goal of Level 1 fieldwork is not necessarily to observe OT in action, but to observe *humans* in action, ideally in natural, authentic environments. Many sites are not your classic OT experiences- there isn't a clear case load of clients seeing a therapist and receiving interventions to support their goals. These non-traditional experiences have their strengths and challenges. It allows students to use an OT lens to see people in real life contexts engage in real life things, which is a priceless opportunity. It also requires flexibility, innovative thinking and creativity - how do they, as future practitioners, see themselves applying OT approaches in this setting?

I had the pleasure of supervising Pace Level 1 Fieldwork students at a very non-traditional site - a domestic violence shelter for parents and children that is working with the Hali Foundation on OT and arts-based programming. This experience required flexibility on all of our parts - mine, because I do not work at this shelter, but was the OT on the ground implementing a program developed by another OT colleague; the students, because scheduling, shifting attendance (as this is a short-term living situation for families), and language barriers were all significant challenges; and the shelter, because finding space, managing materials, and facilitating attendance was not a light life. This experience was a tremendous success not in spite of these issues, but because of them - the students rose to the challenge, embraced the occasional chaos, and provided an arts group that the children and families all adored.

Lisa Raymond-Tolan OTD, OTR/L

Clinical Assistant Professor at NYU, OT Department



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS & RESEARCH



On May 8, 2024, OT student **Lena Kleinberg** represented our program as she co-hosted the annual "Pace Celebrates: Changemakers in Healthcare" event at the NYC campus. This award ceremony recognized alumni and leaders in healthcare and healthcare services who have forged paths that provide opportunities and access to healthcare for all. Proceeds from the event support scholarships for students enrolled in the College of Health Professions. A note from Lena:

"I feel honored that I was asked to host the Changemakers in Healthcare event. The opportunity to introduce and present awards to impactful healthcare professionals in our community was inspiring. I experienced a true sense of pride as a current Pace MSOT student and am hopeful for the future entering into the healthcare field. Having the opportunity to meet and network with established professionals who were once in my shoes sparked my motivation to work toward long term goals of having a large scale impact on healthcare systems and the future patients I will serve. Thank you to everyone in the College of Health Professions for supporting me through this journey and congratulations once again to all of the change makers celebrated at the event, may you continue your important work to improve healthcare systems and our local communities!

As the second part of the research project series, a group of second year students are currently gathering data for their project titled, "A Pedagogical Peer Teaching Approach Between Occupational Therapy Students and Nursing Students to Ensure Safe Patient Handling" under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Tokash. This study aims to assess the use of peer teaching on students' confidence in safe patient handling. This topic is important to explore because of the potential it has to benefit students in the classroom in place of a professor-student relationship. Student researchers include Melissa Nolan, Jessica Wagoner, and Jamie Bittiger. Melissa Nolan explains, "It is really exciting to be able to conduct our own study on a publishable topic and collaborate with the nursing students. Our whole cohort will be active participants as well. I am looking forward to the final product and I'm learning a lot about research through this immersive process." Their final research will be presented next spring at the College of Health Professions Scholarship Day and the first part of this study will be presented at both the 2024 AOTA Educational Summit and NYSOTA as a poster presentation by Dr. Jennifer Tokash, Dr. John Damiao, Jan Hillary Cu, Abigail Schmazel, Marina Saad and Alexandria Glover.

The SpiritualOT Journey



As a holistic profession, OTs consider the mind, body, and spirit. “Spirituality” is embedded within the Occupational Practice Framework and multiple theoretical models, making it a concept that is within our scope of practice and a vital point of consideration. Research indicates that incorporating spirituality into client care enhances health outcomes, well-being, and life engagement. At the American Occupational Therapy Association INSPIRE 2024 Annual Conference, Dr. Alison Rebels facilitated a “Conversation That Matters.” Approximately 40 OTs from across the country came together to explore the link between spirituality and occupational therapy (OT). Participants shared how they address spirituality in practice and the powerful impact it has had on their client’s lives. Inspired by this meaningful dialogue, Dr. Rebels developed “The SpiritualOT Journey,” an eight-week workshop for second-year Pace University MSOT students during the Summer 2024 semester. The curriculum covered the history of spirituality in OT, evidence-based practices, and self-exploration related to concepts such as meaning, authenticity, interconnection, intuition, and mindfulness. Special thanks are given to Dr. Beau Anderson, Dr. Sophie Kaufman, Dr. Jennifer Tokash, and Emmy Vadnais, who greatly enriched the workshop’s content. In addition, special thanks are given to all student participants who embrace the importance of holistic, client-centered care and remain connected to the roots, heart, and soul of our profession.

Alison Rebels, OTD, MS, OTR/L, clinical assistant professor