

PACE OT NEWSLETTER

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Created by the PTE Zeta Gamma Chapter Team



A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

I am proud to report that the Pace OT program has fully emerged as a rising leader in this challenging healthcare landscape, marked by an upward trend in enrollment, academic outcomes, and high-praise from community clinicians. As a new program established in 2019, we faced significant challenges among a sea of competitive programs. However, this fall we usher in 21 students ready to engage in a 'cutting-edge' program.

This transformation is not accidental. Rather, it is the result of dedicated faculty relentlessly pursuing excellence, through innovative experiential learning processes, ongoing curriculum enhancements, and a university-wide commitment to interprofessional student collaboration.

Over the past 4 years, the Pace OT Fieldwork Coordinator, Dr. Jennifer Tokash, played a key role in this transformative process...and we are forever grateful for her contributions to this program. While Dr. Tokash will be leaving the Pace community to pursue new opportunities, we warmly welcome Melanie Evangelista, OTR/L, BCG as the incoming Fieldwork Coordinator. Ms. Evangelista comes to Pace with experience in academia, acute and sub-acute rehabilitation, and is an emerging leader, author, and speaker in Gerontology. I am confident Ms. Evangelista's enthusiasm for occupational therapy, along with the continued dedication of OT faculty, Dr. Alison Rebels and Dr. Supawadee Lee, that our OT student-body will continue to serve as a shining beacon of the critical role Pace University's College of Health Professions plays in the greater healthcare community.

— John Damiao, PhD, OTR/L



Twenty-one students join the Pace MSOT Class of 2027



WHAT IS PACE OT?

Pace University's Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT) Program offers a hybrid, entry level weekday program to aspiring Occupational Therapists. The curriculum is designed to prepare students to become competent and ethical OT practitioners. Within 24 months, students learn how to maximize clients' quality of life. This program teaches future OTs the importance of: evidence-based practice and scholarship, occupation-centered and client-centered approach, ethics and interprofessional practice, and innovation and technology.

Pace's Impact on Student Success

"The Pace OT program taught me the value of being resourceful and embracing lifelong learning. While it provided me with foundational knowledge, what stood out most was how the program encouraged me to continue exploring beyond the classroom. It helped me discover my personal learning style and gave me the confidence to seek out new information, adapt to challenges, and grow as a clinician. That mindset has been essential throughout my career."

-Elias Fraija,
MS, OTR/L,
CSOT, COEE. Class of 2021



Faculty and students at NYSOTA Advocacy Day 2025.



Megan Finn and classmates celebrate the end of the didactic phase during the 2025 Spring Oath Ceremony.

"When starting the Pace OT program, I never thought I would be at the point I am now. The program taught me how to be professional in a work setting, especially with the heavy focus on interprofessional collaboration to promote client centered care. Being in fieldwork, I have learned so much about OT in that specific practice area and how to be an entry-level practitioner, but the curriculum has taught me how important it is to work and communicate with other health professionals. In the field, you are constantly working with other disciplines, so this was a beneficial skill to develop in the classroom to bring into the field."

-Megan Finn, Class of 2025

SOTA at Pace



The Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) at Pace University prides itself on student-led professional development and networking. This non-profit association focuses on networking, leadership, and community outreach. This past year, a collaboration between fundraising, research involvement, and hardwork by SOTA members allowed multiple students to attend the 2025 AOTA conference in Philadelphia which provided an amazing opportunity to form connections and delve deeper into the world of occupational therapy! In addition to fundraising, SOTA also emphasizes the importance of wellness and mental health for the students enrolled in the rigorous program. A new executive board position, Wellness Chair, has been added to ensure that the student's are taking care of themselves to be the best future practitioners that they can be. This includes implementing wellness activities such as lunch potlucks, trivia nights, and positivity exchanges. Recently, the Class of 2026 participated in a letter writing activity where each student wrote a letter addressed to their future OT selves. In the upcoming year, increased efforts to sustain a positive and calm environment in the classroom will be implemented, especially as a new cohort joins the Pace family. SOTA is determined to continue to support its members and build leadership experience in everyone!

Listening with the OT Heart: A Distinctive Value of the Pace MSOT Program

Like all occupational therapy (OT) programs, The Pace University Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT) curriculum emphasizes the development of clinical reasoning skills as a core competency. Students learn to think critically, analyze client strengths and challenges, apply theoretical frameworks, and use evidence-based approaches.

A key distinguishing feature of the Pace MSOT program is our recognition that clinical reasoning includes two essential components: analytical and intuitive. During the Summer 2025 semester, students were introduced to intuitive reasoning—the ability to listen deeply, remain present, and sense the unspoken needs of clients. This often-overlooked dimension is a vital part of effective, person-centered care.

While analytical reasoning provides structure, objectivity, and alignment with theoretical and evidence-based models, intuitive reasoning allows occupational therapists (OTs) to remain flexible and responsive during complex, real-world therapeutic situations. The capacity to notice emotional undercurrents, interpret nonverbal cues, or sense when to pause or shift direction is just as critical as selecting the appropriate assessment or treatment approach.

To support the development of intuitive reasoning, Pace MSOT students are invited to participate in learning experiences that help quiet the mind, encourage presence, and strengthen inner awareness. Students participate in practices such as yoga, meditation, and creative expression—activities that, when nurtured over time, enhance their ability to stay grounded and attuned to subtle clinical cues, even in high-pressure situations.

At Pace, our students don't just learn to think like OTs—they learn to listen with their OT heart. This balance of knowledge and presence is one of the many reasons our MSOT graduates stand out: as competent, creative, and deeply attuned professionals who lead with clarity, compassion, and deep insight.



— Alison Rebels, Clinical Assistant Professor

Farewell to Dr. Tokash

We are so sad to share that Dr. Tokash has left Pace to take on an exciting new role at Touro College, where they will be incredibly lucky to have her. This tribute is a celebration of the lasting impact she has made on our program, our students, and our community. Her dedication, mentorship, and unwavering belief in her students have left an indelible mark, and her influence will be felt for years to come.

First, a word from Dr. Tokash: Reflections on My Time as Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and Clinical Associate Professor at Pace University

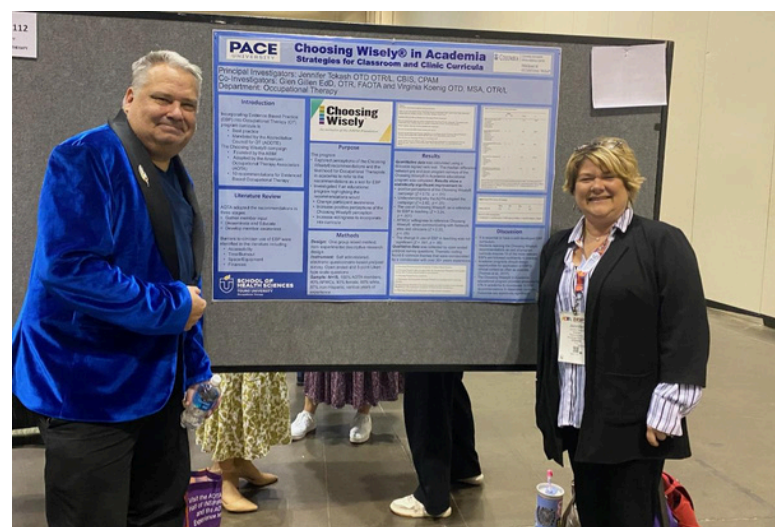
As I look back on my time at Pace University, serving as the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and Clinical Associate Professor, I am filled with gratitude for the experiences, the people, and the moments that have shaped my journey. The heart of my work has always been the students. Hearing from fieldwork educators how prepared and professional our Pace students are has been one of the greatest joys of this role. Watching them grow from eager learners in the classroom to confident, compassionate practitioners in the field has been inspiring.

Some of my fondest memories are woven into the fabric of hands-on, unconventional learning. Dancing to learn spinal cord levels, making “brain hats,” and engaging in wheelchair races—these weren’t just fun; they were moments of connection, creativity, and deep learning. Traveling to Costa Rica with Dr. Marie Charles, Sarah, Richard, Emily, and Melissa from OT was a highlight that blended cultural immersion, professional growth, and lasting friendships. Our work to make the Pace campus more accessible was especially meaningful. Through advocacy and collaboration, we created changes that will outlast us—opening doors (literally and figuratively) for students with different abilities and reimagining what accessibility in higher education can be.

Conferences with the best roommate and friend, Dr. Alison Rebels—whether at NYSOTA or AOTA—were more than professional development; they were an affirmation of the community we’ve built. The interprofessional collaborations with nurses, PAs, registered dietitians, speech-language pathologists, and health science teams reminded me that healthcare education is at its strongest when disciplines work together. The SIM Lab team embraced every idea I brought, pushing me to grow as an instructor and helping us bring innovative scenarios to life. My colleagues—Dr. John, Dr. Rebels, Dr. Lee, and Chrystyna—were more than coworkers; they were family. At Pace, I found a culture of support, transformational leadership, and a shared belief that experiential learning, even when unconventional, is often the most impactful.

As I close this chapter, I do so with deep appreciation for every student, colleague, and collaborator who has been part of this journey. Pace has been more than a workplace—it has been a home. Never forget your deck of cards, seashells, sand dollars! Be the change you want to see in this world and never underestimate the difference you can make 'for just one'

With a great deal of love,
Dr. Tokash



Over the years, Dr. Tokash's students have shared how deeply her teaching, mentorship, and kindness have shaped their journeys. Here are just a few of their words:

"Your warmth, patience, and ability to truly connect with each of us made such a lasting impact. Your confidence in our potential helped us believe in ourselves."
Sam C., Class of 2026

"Your passion for OT and support for us on our graduate school journey has made entering this field feel like an honor. The way you have led us and shown us what true OT looks like is something I will always admire."
Jason, Class of 2026

Dr. Tokash was always our #1 supporter. She wanted to make sure we had everything we needed to feel successful and was constantly asking how the program could be better. She was that ray of sunshine we needed to get through this program."
Alejandra, Class of 2025



"Thank you for introducing me to paths I never knew I needed—paths that sparked my passion for OT and opened doors to new opportunities for growth and challenge. Your openness, creative spirit, and unwavering support will continue to guide me as I move forward."
Lena, Class of 2025

"There are people you meet who leave a lasting impact—people you remember long after the lessons are over. Dr. Tokash is undoubtedly one of those remarkable people. I wish her all the best in her future endeavors."
Richmond, Class of 2025

"You personify the meaning of OT and the meaning of empathy. Thank you for truly caring about our development as future OTs. Good luck in your new career path!"
Richard, Class of 2026

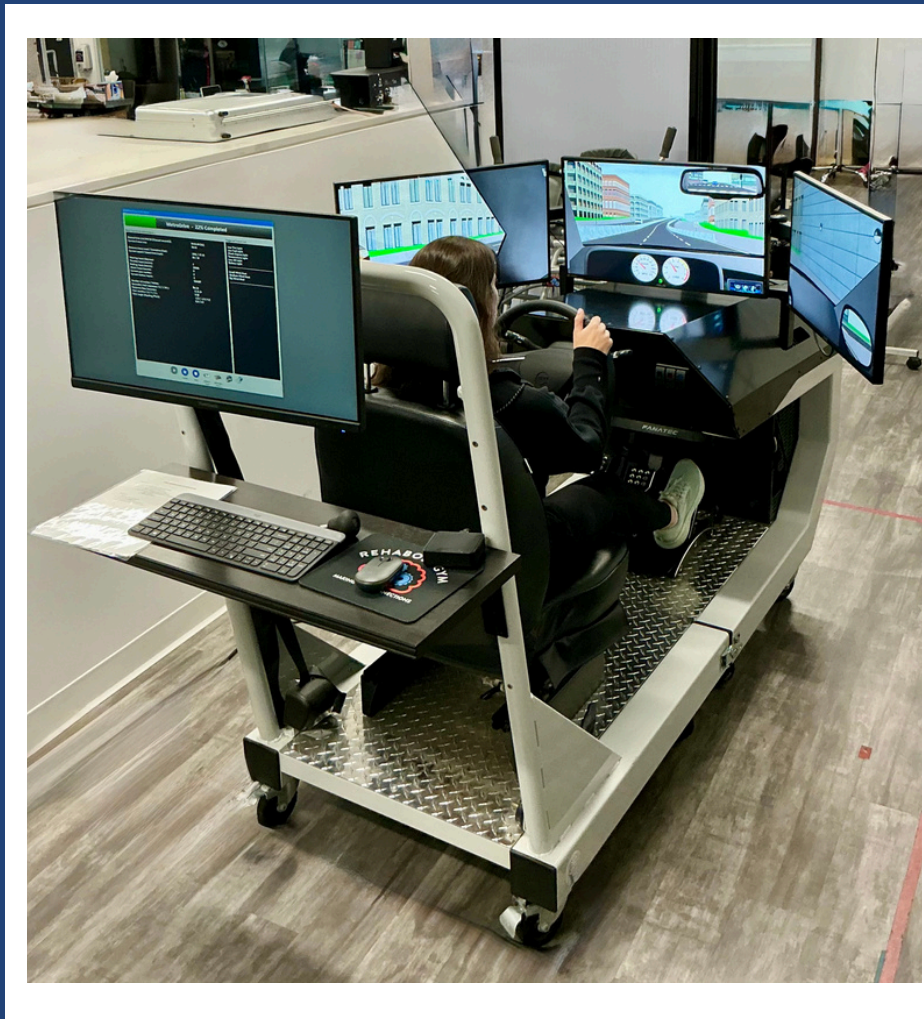
Learning Through Innovation: Fieldwork at Rehabologym

At Pace University, fieldwork education extends beyond traditional placements offering students opportunities to engage with innovative, technology-driven practice settings. We are proud to showcase **Rehabologym**, a Neuro-Robotic Rehabilitation Center that is redefining neurological Occupational Therapist (OT), Physical Therapy (PT) and Speech Therapy (ST/SLP) through state-of-the-art technology and a commitment to quality client-centered care.

OT Innovation in Action

“Supporting 22 OT-DORA skills including attention, memory, and perception, the Driving Simulator donated by Pace University highlights occupational therapy’s vital role in driving rehabilitation—it’s a transformative tool that strengthens cognitive skills, restores independence, and redefines what’s possible in rehabilitation.”

-Sophie Fischer, OTR/L



Through structured modules targeting direction following, executive function skills and visual-perceptual abilities, the simulator provides objective measures that help clinicians tailor OT therapy sessions and track meaningful progress.

The Power of Partnership

This partnership is further strengthened by academic collaboration with Pace University, which has highlighted OT’s expertise and role in driving rehabilitation and provided students with innovative fieldwork experiences that help shape the future of practice.

Rehabologym states, *“Whether being used as a means to help clients return to the road or as a therapeutic cognitive tool, the Driving Simulator has provided tremendous benefit to our patients and stands as just one example of the advanced, high-tech modalities that make Rehabologym a leader in neurological rehabilitation.”*

Why Driving Matters!

For OT’s driving is more than transportation, it’s a vital Instrumental Activity of Daily Living (IADL) tied to independence, community participation, and quality of life. By utilizing the Driving Simulator, Rehabologym not only prepares clients to return to the road but also uses it as a therapeutic cognitive tool to enhance attention, memory, and problem-solving.

Sophie states, *“We have had clients come to Rehabologym after being told that returning to driving was no longer achievable, often after multiple failed attempts at other locations. Through the combination of client dedication, the expertise of our clinicians, and the structured use of the Driving Simulator, many have successfully regained their independence and returned to driving safely.”*



Where Technology Meets Therapy

This fieldwork education partnership provides Pace OT students with unique fieldwork education opportunities, bridging classroom learning with real-world neurorehabilitation practice at the forefront of technology and innovation. We are grateful for our ongoing collaboration with Rehabologym, whose mission aligns with Pace OT’s dedication to preparing the next generation of occupational therapists. Together we are building a future of innovation, independence, and client-centered care.