

Spring 2022 UF OT Newsletter



Letter from the Chair

**Dear Colleagues, Advisory Board Members,
Friends, Alumni, and Students:**

Our Spring semester is transitioning into an early Florida Summer – with an abundance of activities, programs, projects, and progress in our department! This semester kicked off with our students re-engaging in all of our campus activities, all of us learning to live with yet another Covid-19 mutation—the Delta variant—and launching our 7th annual, and 2nd virtual, Sandra Edwards Colloquium. This very successful colloquium boasted 200 people learning about *Functional Cognition in Occupational Therapy:*

Assessment, Intervention and Technology across the Lifespan. Thanks again to Dr. Tim Wolf our keynote and Dr. Lenin Grajo our plenary speakers—and all who have made this a splendid event! Much has occurred since then—and I will highlight a few core activities.

- **Celebrating Woman's History Month.** We were honored to remember and celebrate all that Alice Jantzen, Ph.D. (first chair of the UF OT Department) and Lela Llorens, Ph.D. (who is believed to be the first African American occupational therapy chair in the country) did as foundational leaders for our department during March's "Celebrating Women's History Month". Read more about these exceptional female leaders:
<https://phhp.ufl.edu/2022/03/01/celebrating-womens-history-month/>
- **OT Summit for Scholars.** Our department is honored to be one of the four universities to host the next four (2023-2026) OT Summit for Scholars events. We are excitedly starting to engage in the planning of these events. UF OT will host in 2024!
- **AOTA Annual Conference.** Ten faculty, students, and our director of development attended the annual AOTA meeting in San Antonio, TX, in April. We delivered workshops, presentations, and posters, and participated in the AOTF-sponsored Breakfast with a Scholar, the Research Symposium, and many other events. We hosted an excellent Alumni Reception and of course, showcased our departmental activities in the Expo Hall where many of our alums and friends visited. Thank you all for your interest in UF OT—and for your support!
- **National Partnerships.** The Department has formed excellent partnerships with two of our national professional organizations, i.e., the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and ADED; and one national service organization, i.e., Veterans Helping Veterans, USA, Inc. As for our AOTA and ADED partnerships, we are excited to help develop pathways in building capacity to educate and train driver rehabilitation specialists. With our Veterans Helping Veterans, USA, Inc. partnership, we will expand our Veteran research to a state and national level.
- **New Dean.** The PHHP Search Committee has completed a successful search for the new Dean of our college—and we expect an announcement to be made soon. Thank you, Dean Perri, for 15

years of excellent leadership as Dean of our college. Our next Dean will assume functions in the Summer of 2022.

- **Two Faculty Members Elected for National Offices.** Dr. Linda Struckmeyer has been elected to serve on the AOTA Board of Directors as Secretary for the next academic year. Dr. Sherrilene Classen has been elected and appointed as the Chair of the Research Committee for the National Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists.
- **Philanthropy.** The College's Giving Day elicited amazing gifts from so many faculty, staff, friends, alumni, and philanthropists—and we want to give a special shout-out to all who had contributed so graciously to the OT Department funds.
- **OT Advisory Board Meeting.** Our board met in March—and we had great enthusiasm, excitement, and plans to continue to contribute to the mission and vision of the department. A hearty welcome to our newest board member—Mrs. Wendy Alexander.
- **Dissertation Defenses.** We have two Ph.D. dissertation defenses scheduled for the remainder of 2022—and hope to provide a positive report in our next newsletter.
- **Post-Professional Certificate in Driver Rehabilitation Therapy.** We are launching our second Driver Rehabilitation Therapy Program on May 9th, 2022, and have good enrollment in this online course. For more information, please visit <https://drt.ot.phhp.ufl.edu/>.

Finally in celebration of **OT month**—I want to pay tribute to each one of you—faculty, staff, students, advisory board members, alumni, colleagues, and friends of the department. We are so proud of you, as well as our place in the Gator Nation, and so thankful for all your contributions in support of our department, university, and profession!

Sherrilene Classen, Ph.D., MPH, OTR/L, FAOTA, FGSA
Professor and Chair: Department of Occupational Therapy
University of Florida | College of Public Health and Health Professions
1225 Center Drive, HPNP Room 2107 | Gainesville, FL 32611



Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program Graduates First Class

The Class of 2021 made history in December as the first OTD graduates from a public university in Florida. Graduates presented capstone project posters followed by the Awards and Pinning Ceremony and Doctoral Commencement. Awardees included Ke'Andra Clayton (Alice C. Jantzen Award for

Excellence), Carolina Castillo (Jane Slaymaker Memorial Award), and Shelby Waldron (Ann Sirmyer Ballard Memorial Award for Outstanding Graduate). Samantha Witte presented the Class of 2021 Scholarship, a fund developed by the graduating class to provide support for a third-year student. Student speaker, Laura Sellew, summed up her UF experience, saying “I know that this class can do anything we set our minds to, and we will make big changes with our ideas, our work ethic, and our kindness.... Do what we spent the last 3 years here at UF learning to do... And remember that no problem is too big for a Gator OT.”

**Learn more about the Class of 2021 Scholarship Program
and how you can help deserving OTD students.**

**Learn
More**

2022 Robert A. Levitt Awards for Student Research on Aging at Oak Hammock



On March 25, the Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR) held the first round of the 2022 Robert A. Levitt Awards for Student Research on Aging at Oak Hammock. The event featured 16 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows' concurrent poster presentations. Two doctoral students from the Department of Occupational Therapy students, **Carlyn Ellison (Mentors: Drs. Classen and Struckmeyer)** and **Raghuveer Chandrashekar (Mentor: Dr. Hongwu Wang)** have been selected among five finalists of the competition. The final round will be held on April 8th involving each competitor giving a brief oral presentation followed by a Q&A session. Carlyn will be presenting on identifying threats to home safety and accessibility of older adults with pets and Raghuveer will be presenting on the feasibility and effectiveness of a wearable focal vibration device for older adults with diabetic peripheral neuropathy. The competition gives our students the opportunity to practice effectively conveying their research to an interested community audience. We wish them the best of luck!

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Update

The coordination of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) endeavors in the Department is undergoing transition. The *DEI Taskforce*, which was originally formed as a temporary body to work on specific initiatives beginning in 2020, is becoming the *DEI Committee*, which is a more permanent entity in the Department, with greater

opportunities for training and broader reach. This change reflects the Department's ongoing commitment to prioritizing DEI matters at the student, staff, and faculty level. An additional transition relates to the DEI Coordinator. Dr. Shechtman, who has been leading the Departmental DEI efforts is retiring, and Dr. Stefanie Bodison will fully transition into this role in April 2022. In her tenure as the DEI Taskforce Coordinator, Dr. Shechtman worked with her team to launch the Department's DEI web page, create a resource list, develop a DEI consciousness-raising unit for students, and conduct several town-hall meetings with students, staff, and faculty.



Dr. Stefanie Bodison and Dr. Orit Shechtman

Congratulations to the Outgoing OT EAC Student Board



The current OT EAC Student Executive Board will be transitioning out of their current roles at the end of this semester and the new board will begin their term in May of 2022. This student board, with supervision from faculty and volunteer community clinicians, has served over 20 clients in the Gainesville area through alternating weekly telehealth and on-site clinics.

Students had the opportunity to develop and hone hands-on clinical skills including car transfers, community mobility, wheelchair navigation, adaptive equipment for daily activities, and caregiver training related to safe mobility and self-care. Additionally, the students have developed excellent skills

related to clinic logistics, specifically clinical reasoning, problem-solving, and adaptability. Congratulations to the 2021-2022 board for completing your terms! Thank you, Dr. Anne Galloway, for ensuring excellence in the EAC operations!

SmartDriver is Blooming and Growing



We are pleased to welcome Barbara DuPont (pictured right) to the SmartDriver program as our new administrative assistant. Barbara is a UF grad. She retired from the UF School of Veterinary Medicine as an Administrative Specialist II in 2020, but couldn't stay away. She has quickly ramped up her knowledge of driver rehabilitation. Her compassion combined with her stellar customer service skills are already helping the program to grow.

The OTD students are being exposed to all the aspects of Driver Rehabilitation. Beth Gibson, OTR/L, CDRS (pictured left) was a recent guest lecturer on Teen Driving and Community Mobility for the second year Participation and Health course. Driver Rehabilitation was represented as an option for the first time at the OTD Capstone Fair in April. Most exciting is second-year OTD student Tiffany Knudtson is starting her Level II practicum with the SmartDriver program in May. SmartDriver now provides clinical driver rehabilitation service three days per week.

[Learn
More](#)

UF OT takes the Alamo City by Storm at the 2022 AOTA INSPIRE Conference

The UF OT Department kicked off OT Month in attendance at the 2022 AOTA INSPIRE Conference in San Antonio, Texas, March 31st – April 3rd. UF OT faculty and students presented on topics spanning the rehabilitation care continuum across the lifespan. Presentations included educational workshops, research-focused, and OT education short courses, and scientific poster presentations contributed to by our faculty, Ph.D. students, and OTD students. Faculty and students engaged with speakers and other attendees and stayed abreast of emerging areas within OT with table sponsorship at the AOTF Breakfast with a Scholar and State of the Science symposiums. We reconnected with Gator Nation OTs at both our

booth at the Conference Expo and our UF Alumni Event. Expo Booth and Alumni Event guests included alumni who serve in AOTA leadership, UF OT Advisory Board members, a University Dean, and three UF Master of Occupational Therapy alumni who are new junior faculty at research-intensive and minority-serving institutions. Go Gators!



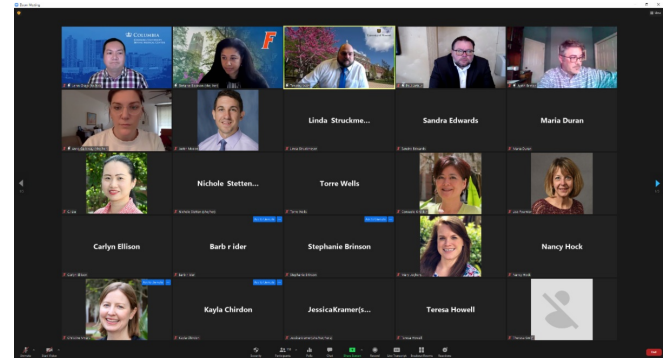
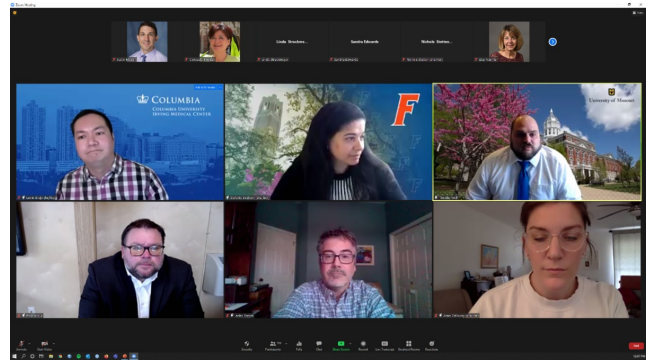
UF OT faculty and students attending the 2022 AOTA Inspire Conference.



UF OT Alumni Reception at the 2022 AOTA Inspire Conference.

2022 Virtual Sandra Edwards Colloquium

The Department of Occupational Therapy hosted the sixth annual Sandra Edwards Colloquium on February 12, 2022. The theme for this year's colloquium was "Functional Cognition in Occupational Therapy: Assessment, Intervention and Technology Across the Lifespan". The live online event hosted 153 attendees consisting of clinicians, scholars, and students. Dr. Tim Wolf, Associate Dean for Research and Chair of Occupational Therapy at the University of Missouri, provided the keynote: "Functional Cognition: History and Theoretical Concepts" - which situated the rest of the conference to address the emerging research and practice area of "Functional Cognition-applying cognition in everyday activities" in occupational therapy. Dr. Paul Arthur, Chair of Occupational Therapy at the University of Southern Indiana, and Dr. Lenin Grajo, Director of the Post-Professional Occupational Therapy Program at Columbia University, led plenaries discussing utilizing technology within smart homes and developing measurements of functional cognition.



Once a Gator OT Always a Gator OT! Happy OT Month!

April is Occupational Therapy Month and the perfect time to spotlight our Gator OT Community! A heartfelt thank you to UF OT Gator alumni and their investment in the development of our OTD students' knowledge translation, clinical skills, and professional identities. As a department, we are committed to intentional and unified collaborative efforts to enhance evidence-based research, clinical best practices, and hands-on skill training. UF OT is made greater because of outstanding community clinicians and stakeholders who collaborate with faculty to elevate the profession and develop our future colleagues through guest lectures, fieldwork education, capstone mentorship, and modeling professional participation on a state and national level. Visit the [UF PHHP Facebook page](#) throughout the month of April and the [UF OT alumni page](#) to view the Alumni Spotlights for National Occupational Therapy Month! #OTMonth

OT PRACTITIONER
SPOTLIGHTS
#OTMONTH



Supriya Dass
MOT '11

UF | College of Public Health
& Health Professions
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



Jennifer Unger
MOT '05

UF OT Now Offering 36 Continuing Education Courses for Occupational Therapy Practitioners and Driver Rehabilitation Specialists



UF OT has tripled its continuing education (CE) offerings to meet the needs of licensed occupational therapy practitioners and driver rehabilitation specialists. In addition to the faculty contribution to our CE program, we have spent this past year soliciting content from clinicians out in the trenches. These clinicians have come to our instructional design studio to record high-quality content that addresses today's rehabilitation needs. Examples of our most recent courses include Rehabilitation of the Burn Patient, An Overview of Cancer and the Role of Occupational Therapy in Cancer Rehabilitation, and Safe Patient Handling with Regards to Mobility Cardiopulmonary Conditions. All of our courses are included as part of our \$75/year subscription.

[Learn](#)

UF OT Welcomes the 2022 Cohort for the Driver Rehabilitation Therapy (DRT) Post-Professional Certificate Program

We are thrilled to welcome our new DRT class made up of professional students from around the world. Our future driver rehabilitation specialists will be trained to address a significant driver rehabilitation need for over 61 million people with disabilities including 40 million older adults. Our students receive 14 graduate credits across three semesters, composed of online course work, onsite mentorship, and an opportunity to receive on-site skills/competency training and testing in driver rehabilitation therapy. Finally, we are excited to have our newest faculty member and certified driver rehabilitation specialist, Beth Gibson (right) leading our courses. Ms. Gibson is a licensed occupational therapist and brings 25 years of driver rehabilitation experience and expertise to her role.



UF OT VA Rural Health Partnership

UF OT is strengthening its



collaboration with the VA Office of Rural Health (ORH). Rural Veterans face unique challenges in accessing quality care, including rehabilitation, and may also experience health conditions created or intensified by combat-related injuries and illnesses. These challenges are often complicated by other difficulties common in rural areas, including fewer housing, education, employment, and transportation options; as well as provider shortages and limited broadband. OT faculty are using

their expertise in transportation solutions, telerehabilitation, environmental adaptations, and policy to address some of the challenges our rural Veterans face. The Gainesville Veterans Rural Health Resource Center, an ORH satellite office, is currently funding 5 projects with OT faculty in a leading or supporting role. These projects are also an opportunity for OT graduate students to gain research experience to develop into doctoral dissertations. Other collaborations under consideration include rural health pre-doctoral and post-doctoral positions, rural health curriculum development, and rehabilitation technology testing.

Dr. Shechtman is Retiring: *Reflections on my 29-year career at UF OT*

My OT journey started in 1993 as a second career. I already had a Ph.D. in exercise physiology and five years of research experience. However, I really wanted to pursue my passion: teaching. UF OT offered me the opportunity to teach anatomy while getting an OT Master's degree. I have taught the human body science courses (neuroscience, anatomy, pathophysiology, and kinesiology) to thousands of Bachelor, Masters, and Doctoral students. I also designed a teaching course and a learning unit on my current focus: diversity, equity, and inclusion. My research has been focused on measurements, from grip strength and sincerity of effort to driving simulator assessments. Interestingly, I've had an office in three buildings, had three deans, and three department chairs. My most treasured experience over these years has been connecting with the students while doing my best to ensure that they learn, understand, and value the human body and how it works.



“Know Your Big Toe Health” - An Interactive

Seminar to Residents at Oak Hammock

Dr. Hongwu Wang and his Ph.D. student, Raghuveer Chandrashekhar, shared the importance of monitoring big toe health with 30 residents at Oak Hammock, a retirement community in Gainesville, FL, on March 24, 2022. The attendees had an opportunity to try out “ToeScale,” an innovative portable technology that is the first and only portable device to measure big toe extension and flexion strength. The attendees provided feedback on the device and commented on the lack of toe strength assessment during their clinical visits. Dr. Wang’s team is currently investigating how ToeScale measures are associated with health and functional performance in older adults and establishing “Norms” of big toe strength for clinical decision making.



Dr. Wang talked about the importance of toe health



Oak Hammock residents experienced the technology

UF OT Welcomes Two New Staff Members



Taylor Atkins (left) joins us as the Academic Assistant to support our OTD Capstone and Fieldwork Coordinators and the Driving Rehabilitation Therapy Certification Program. Taylor has a Criminology and Law degree from UF. In her spare time, Taylor enjoys travel and spent time living in



Barbara DuPont (right) is supporting UF SmartDriver Rehabilitation Services with scheduling, client intake, and marketing. Barbara previously worked for the College of Veterinary Medicine. In her spare time, Barbara enjoys nature and is a FrogWatch USA certified volunteer. Barbara also enjoys travel and sailed for 7 years in the Caribbean Sea aboard a 40-ft

Thailand before joining our department.

trimaran sailboat built by her husband, Charles.

Barbara and Taylor are already making meaningful contributions to the Department of Occupational Therapy and we are so glad they are here!



University Of Florida | Department of Occupational Therapy

1225 Center Drive
Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone Number:
(352) 273-6817

[Email Us](#)

