Improving DEI Content of the OTD Curriculum

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Background and Purpose

Last year, George Floyd’s murder represented a watershed moment in United States history. Around the country and after widespread, well-founded outcry, universities realized they were not doing enough to engage in anti-racist pedagogy and were not doing enough to serve diverse students. Locally, UF’s OTD Curriculum Committee engaged with their students and faculty and implemented an action plan to address institutionalized racism in the program and to increase the feelings of belongingness, solidarity and community within the OT program.

Our Approach. The OTD curriculum committee established vision and mission statements and a new membership structure to include students. We generated objectives to focus on making the UF-OTD curriculum more inclusive and culturally competent. In our efforts to identify curricular gaps and areas to enhance anti-racism and other DEI content, we 1) asked for student feedback through surveys and town hall meetings and 2) gathered suggestions and recommendations in faculty meetings and 3) we created a DEI Concerns Committee to proactively engage with issues as they arise.

Vision Statement. The curriculum committee strives to make the UF OT curriculum more inclusive and culturally competent. We envision an OTD curriculum that is representative of the communities that OTs serve and educates OT students to be active change agents who implement anti-racism and promote diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Mission Statement. The mission of the curriculum committee is to ensure that the OTD curriculum values and reflects diversity and the lived experience of black and indigenous persons of color.

Town Halls

We conducted 3 townhall meetings which brought together various students, faculty, staff and administrators to enhance understanding the challenges, identify existing solutions and to discuss potential solutions in moving towards a culture of belonging and anti-racism.

June 2020. Covered systemic racism, biases, and possible solutions. A survey was sent out before the meeting to seek input. Attendees discussed the need for support to cope with the systemic racism, changes needed at academic and fieldwork level to address concerns.

I would like to see more discussion about health disparities, discuss the denial of the experience of pain especially for Black women, discuss provider distrust and race, acknowledge the white history of OT — student

July 2020. Concerns focused on fieldwork, addressing implicit biases outside of the institute.

When discussing health disparities, we should address the systematic issues that cause them. — student

Considering Your Own Biases

November 2020. Focused on continued information gathering and monitoring effectiveness and action steps. Importance of safe spaces to discuss concerns were enlisted with proposed action steps to formalize the process using the multi stakeholder approach of a concerns committee.

OTD Curriculum Committee is comprised of UF OT Leadership, faculty and students

Curricular Revisions

Themes:
• Identified gaps in the classes and curriculum to make the content more inclusive
• Addressed issues dealing with intrinsic factors while handling systemic racism
• Understanding implicit vs explicit biases
• Collaboration between classes to make sure of consistency of issues being addressed

Example. Photos were used to discuss phrasing for bias-free questions a clinician might pose to gain a clinical/social history. For example, a clinician might state, “Tell me more about how you two know each other” instead of stating, “How long have you been married?”

I would like to see my classes include more culturally diverse case studies — student

Multi-level implementation:
• Student understand needs and learning styles given varied concerns of BIPOC individuals
• Faculty help reshape curricular additions incorporating tools to mitigate racism.
• Leadership understand accreditation standards and redundancy reinforcement of concepts across the curriculum.

Concerns Committee

Purpose. This committee will be a place to respond to specific complaints that are related to issues of diversity, inclusion and racism in some element of the OT program and issues that come up in the program that are focused on some element of the curriculum or program.

Structure. This committee consists of the following members:
6 Students (2 from each year; 1 primary and 1 alternate)
• Chair (Year 2 or Year 3 student)
• Vice-Chair (Year 2 or Year 3 student)
3 Faculty and staff members
2 Voting
• 1 Faculty
• 1 faculty/staff
1 Non-voting
• OTD Program Director (ad hoc)

Meetings. The Committee will meet a minimum of once per semester and as concerns arise. The committee will determine the process and timeline for responding to concerns. The committee will respond in a timely manner. The committee will make recommendations to the program director and/or parties involved as appropriate. The committee will use conflict resolution and de-escalation strategies as warranted in each case. The committee will handle conflict with privacy/comfort concerns in mind.