Fieldwork Plan Reflecting Curricular Design

The curricular threads of the MSOT program focus on a student-centric approach with an overarching focus on critical thinking in occupation-centered practice, ethical decision-making, and inter-professional collaboration resulting in the promotion of health and well-being for a diverse society. To this end, the program is designed to combine didactic and practical experiences embedded from the beginning of the program.

Beginning with the first semester, students participate in Level I Fieldwork for 4 consecutive semesters. The purpose of Level I Fieldwork is to provide students with practical applied knowledge in mock or actual settings with populations from the Grand Junction area. Students will have a weekly opportunity to debrief their fieldwork experience with faculty and peers in both an experiential and a seminar format.

All faculty will collaborate with students in each Level I Fieldwork practicum. Specifically, faculty will contribute either a potential mock case (or group of cases) as well as provide the opportunity to evaluate a standardized patient. The Level I Fieldwork experience will provide students the necessary skills to practice observation, evaluation and interpretation of data followed by a discussion format to increase shared learning experiences. Level I Fieldwork will include experiences in developing awareness of the social determinants of health inclusive of wellness, behavioral health, physical, mental and emotional health across the lifespan. Students will observe, analyze and interpret the needs of people with various degrees of health concerns from at-risk to end of life care.

During the first semester, the Level I FW experience involves: participation in traditional and emerging practice areas in wellness communities. This experience is focused on meeting the behavioral health needs of at risk individuals. Hands-on experience interacting with groups of at-risk individuals will be developed by faculty in collaboration with the students focused on activities promoting health and occupational engagement. This first Level I FW experience emphasizes the curricular threads of ethical decision making for promotion of health and well being for at risk communities.

During the second semester, the Level I FW experience involves: participation in traditional and emerging practice areas in occupational therapy, inclusive of behavioral health, for adults and older adults. Exploration of health and disability via hands-on experience with supervision to practice professional skills and influence occupational performance and behavioral health. This experience will emphasize the promotion of health and wellness for older adults who may be seeking to age-in-place as well as adults who are experiencing acute or chronic illness and are no longer able to participate in desired occupations.

During the third semester, the Level I FW experience involves: participation in traditional and emerging practice areas, inclusive of behavioral health, where occupation is the focus of intervention for infants, children and adolescents with congenital or acquired disability. Exploration of factors influencing occupational performance and behavioral health via
supervised hands on experience and practice of professional skills. Students and faculty will have the opportunity to learn about the range of congenital, developmental, acute and chronic conditions affecting the occupations of youth in various settings.

During the fourth semester, the Level I FW experience involves: didactic and experiential opportunities to analyze diverse cases from multiple inter-professional perspectives to prepare the student for professional life. The student will experience a variety of professional perspectives including, but not limited to, special education, nursing, physical therapy, speech therapy, athletic training, physicians and physician assistants. This experience will provide students with tools to learn inter-professional collaboration, assessment and goal setting in order to meet the client’s unique occupational and health care needs.

The four semesters of consecutive Level I experiences build upon one another to address prevention to intervention and community collaboration with health care providers across a range of disciplines. Thus, early and frequent practical experiences are aimed to help prepare students for future Level II Fieldwork experiences as well as future roles in health care by meeting the students where they are in knowledge acquisition and application of the didactic portion of the curriculum by laying a solid foundation in ethical decision-making for the health and well-being of their clients, communities and populations served in the future.

Level II Fieldwork experiences include a range of emerging, traditional and non-traditional settings. For example, the curriculum provides a foundation in prevention in the first semester with an emphasis on health and wellness as well as practical experiences in applying wellness prevention strategies. This prevention approach is also emphasized for each client population in successive semesters (i.e., older adults, adults, adolescents, youth and at risk populations).

A Level II Fieldwork site in Colorado may include working with homeless youth and families, meeting the mental health needs of adults at risk of suicide who are in outpatient or inpatient care where an occupational therapist may or may not be present. Likewise, a Fieldwork Level II experience may be conducted as telehealth occupational therapy in early intervention, elementary or secondary education settings, at home, or in outpatient clinics of Colorado where no services exist or are significantly restricted. Applying leadership skills in both traditional and non-traditional settings as well as in emerging practice areas is a hallmark feature of this MSOT program as evidenced by the many possibilities for meeting the needs of the rural and urban areas in Colorado.