

# OT-ALC Meeting: Difficult Conversations about Challenges in OT Education

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WashU Medicine Occupational Therapy



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## Format for Day 2 Session

- Three issues related to challenges in OT Education.
- There will be a panel of OT program directors sharing their experiences for each issue.
- A 20-minute breakout session for OT-ALC members to share experiences and identify ways the association can further support OT programs.
- Please document your discussion and send a copy to the Box folder. These will be collated, thematized, and sent to appropriate AOTA leadership channels.
- 10-minute break after each issue.

# Access the Discussion Documents on Box



Issue 1:

# Faculty Recruitment and Retention





# ***Faculty Recruitment & Retention Issues***

Shanese L. Higgins, DHSc, OTR/L, BCMH,  
FAOTA

Kettering College

# Contextual Structure of Kettering College



- Small
  - 757 Student Body
  - 182 Graduate Students
    - 55 OTD Students
- Private
- Non-profit
- Faith-based
- Allied Health Programs *only*
  - *OTD is the first and only doctoral program*
- Connected to local health System
  - 14 Medical Centers
  - 120+ Outpatient Facilities (e.g. Primary Care, On Demand Care, Rehab)

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## Scope of the Challenge

- Slated for 9 faculty Positions including PD, AFWC, and DCC
- Currently have 6 fulltime faculty including PD, AFWC, and DCC
- Utilizing
  - 5 Adjuncts for core classes
  - 3 Adjuncts as Faculty Mentors for Capstone
  - 3 Clinical Preceptors for Level I Psych

# Solutions Tried

TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

WORD OF MOUTH

REQUEST FOR NOMINATION

CONNECTING WITH ALUMNI AND  
MENTORING THEM FOR TRANSITION



# Lessons Learned

- Innovation and Creativity are KEY!
- Less is more
  - Working with a few adjuncts dedicated to the program and community and finding ways to support them teaching across the curriculum as appropriate allows for continuity and stability; rather than one adjunct assigned to only one course that changes from year to year and semester to semester



Photo by Pixabay: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/clear-light-bulb-placed-on-chalkboard-355952/A>

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# Call to Action for AOTA

- Truly consider stalling the proliferation of newly accredited programs as the number of available and prepared faculty is limited which is in dissonance with ACOTE requirements for faculty prepared to demonstrate expertise in the areas they teach. Continuing to open programs unchecked creates threats for current programs unable to fill the roles for faculty; not from lack of trying but from lack of a pool of prepared and interested candidates.



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# ***Faculty Recruitment / Retention Issues***

Julia Henderson-Kalb  
Wendy Stav

Saint Louis University



SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

—  
OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

- Urban
- Private/Catholic (Jesuit)
- Master's entry program
- Research University – high research activity
- College – teaching intensive

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# Frame the Scope of the Challenge

1. Mixed messaging between Carnegie classification and college / department needs
2. Lack of faculty, cannot fill faculty positions
  - Specific practice areas
  - Covering curriculum
3. Lack of preparation for teaching and/or scholarship and lack of time to mentor for this issue
  - Clinicians not prepared for academia
  - Tenure vs. Non-Tenured

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# Solutions Tried

1. Reliance on workload policy for teaching/ research allocation and advocacy
2. Hire clinicians as adjuncts to teach content and support ratios in labs
3. Created an adjunct asynchronous orientation
  - Informal mentoring of adjuncts teaching classes
  - Encourage use of university-supported teaching center (CTTL)

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# Lessons Learned

- Policies such as workload become outdated or change
- Fiscal state of higher education limits possibilities
- Adjunct clinicians are a band-aid to the problem
- The more we can communicate with adjuncts, the better!



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# Call to Action for AOTA

- Develop policies with minimum allowable full-time faculty
- Use accreditation as a tool to require universities to hire faculty
- Develop a course or credential on teaching and academia



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# ***Supporting Faculty Success in a Research University***

Christine Myers, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, FNAP  
October 1, 2024

University of Florida

# Scope of the Challenge

- *University of Florida*
  - R1 Doctoral University- Very High Research Activity
  - \$1.25 billion research revenue in 2023
  - Teaching, research, and service missions
  - Expectation that ***all*** clinical faculty engage in scholarship
  - Requirements for promotion



*Century Tower, UF Campus*

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# Solutions

## *“Culture of collaboration and support”*

- **Faculty mentor-mentee process developed**
  - All junior faculty assigned a senior faculty mentor
  - Guide onboarding after hiring
  - Regular meetings to support faculty role (teaching, scholarship, service)
- **Scholarship Community of Practice Spring '21 – Spring '22**
  - Led by senior clinical faculty
  - Focus on integrating current knowledge about research with potential scholarship activities
- **Mentored scholarship**
  - Outgrowth of Scholarship CoP
  - Led to 6 unique collaborative publications and 11 unique presentations at national or state conferences with 4 junior and 4 senior clinical faculty since 2022

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# Lessons Learned

- **Culture of our department provided the foundation**
  - **We were successful because:**
    - support from administration
    - senior faculty valued and desired collaboration with junior faculty
- **Scholarship takes time to develop**
  - **Junior faculty with a limited research background benefited from:**
    - a scaffolded approach
    - realistic timelines for project development and dissemination
    - workloads that included time for scholarship (*decreased time in 2022 for those not funded*)
- **Keep the end in mind**
  - **Junior faculty now well-situated for:**
    - developing or building on their scholarship interests
    - future promotion

# Call to Action for AOTA



*Plaza of the Americas, UF Campus*

- *Empower junior faculty with limited backgrounds in scholarship*
  - Resources and mentorship
  - Community of Practice model for university programs across Carnegie Classifications



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# Access the Discussion Documents on Box



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# Breakout Discussion Guide

1. Join a breakout room.
2. Assign a Discussion Facilitator and Scribe.
3. Discussion prompts:
  - ***What challenges are you facing in your program related to this issue?***
  - ***What solutions have you tried in your program?***
  - ***How can the Association support OT programs to help solve this issue?***
4. Document the discussion in the Discussion Worksheet.
5. Save a copy of the Discussion Worksheet in the Box folder.

# 10-minute Break

Issue 2:

# Student Recruitment and Enrollment Decline





# ***Student Recruitment & Enrollment***

Shanese L. Higgins, DHSc, OTR/L, BCMH,  
FAOTA

Kettering College

# Contextual Structure of OTD Program at Kettering College

## Small

Approved to seat 28 students per Cohort

## Current Class Size

3<sup>rd</sup> Year Cohort: 24

2<sup>nd</sup> Year Cohort: 15

1<sup>st</sup> Year Cohort: 16

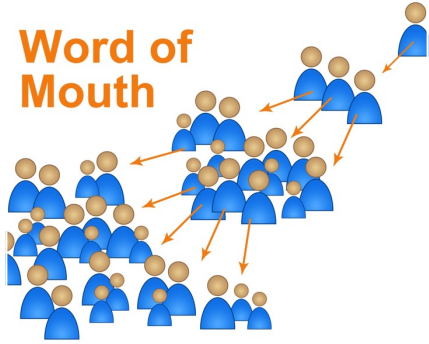


# Historical Challenges




ADOBE: Find your own way - road sign message  
By [guy](#)

**Recruitment and Admissions**



ADOBE: Word Of Mouth Represents Social Media Marketing And Connect  
By [Stuart Miles](#)

**Marketing**



Stressful people waiting for job interview  
By [tv](#)

**Required Interviews**

# Solutions Tried

CENTRALIZING GRADUATE ADMISSIONS (NEW IN 2024)

LINKING AOTA WHAT IS OT YOUTUBE TO MAIN PROGRAM WEBSITE

STRATEGIC OPEN HOUSE EACH SEMESTER

EXCEPTIONAL CANDIDATE POLICY IN ALIGNMENT WITH NEW SCOTUS RULING ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN ACADEMIA



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# Lessons Learned

## Do What You Gotta Do!



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# Call to Action for AOTA

1. Again, consider slowing down the number of newly accredited programs so that currently open programs have an increased opportunity to fill seats. Continuing to open programs unchecked creates threats for current programs unable to fill seats.
2. Create more branding and marketing that explains the many roles of OT that can be shared in lieu of traditional observation hours.
3. Ensure the Pathway Initiative Begun at AOTA 2023 continues at every Ed Summit and Inspire to expose local students from marginalized backgrounds to OT!
4. Choose ONE entry-point with reasonable timelines and number of standards. This may help programs to cost-set Tuition more appropriately for enhanced access to all programs vs. one or the other based on availability and/or willingness to go into increased debt.



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# ***Student Recruitment & Enrollment Decline***

Jenny Womack PhD OTR/L FAOTA  
October 1, 2024

Appalachian State University

# The Context: Appalachian State University

- Public institution founded in 1899; became part of the University of NC system in 1971
- 21,500 students/2,010 graduate students
- Moving from a Comprehensive Masters to an R2 Carnegie classification
- OT is a program in Rehabilitation Sciences Dept along with AT & SLP
- College of Health Sciences includes nursing, nutrition, social work, ex sci, public health & recreation mgmt/PE
- Located in the rural northwest corner of the state – literally “up the mountain”



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# The Scope of the Challenge at App State

- Developing MSOT program in a public institution: recruitment of the inaugural cohort for Fall 2024 with Candidacy status
- State context for OT education: 9 entry-level OT programs (4 OTD; 4 MOT; 1 in transition to OTD) / 9 OTA programs
- Considering the proliferation of programs in the last decade in NC, why another one?
- How might we complement/partner with other programs given that we will be complicating the recruitment landscape – while also optimizing our enrollment?

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# Solutions Tried

- Focused recruitment on the region served by the institution (Western NC – specifically High Country region) that is considered rural and underserved, especially regarding OT
- Maintained program application as an institutional admissions process, orienting toward students who know the institution and focusing on affordability
- Conducted a high-touch admissions process, with multiple points of contact, virtual information sessions, on-site events, and frequent informational and "nurture" messages initiated by our institutional graduate admissions team, as well as the OT faculty
- Conducted virtual interviews as part of the admissions process; holistic admissions scoring focused equally on service orientation and interest in/willingness to serve in rural contexts as on academic achievements. Very deliberate questioning around applicants' knowledge of and commitment to App State
- We opted to remain an MSOT entry-level degree because it fits the needs of the region and the institution. We respect the evolution toward an entry-level doctoral degree but hope to partner with other universities for accessible PP-OTD options to which we can direct our students
- Students who enter the program can currently complete a 24-month MSOT for less than \$35,000 in tuition and fees

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# Lessons Learned

- We had a successful recruitment season, with 85 completed applications for 24 spots; inaugural cohort is full
- Our primary competitors were other public in-state institutions plus the 2 geographically closest private institutions: admitted 5 students from our waitlist
- Despite our fears, accreditation status did not seem to deter students if they understood the process
- It was important to tap our graduate admissions office for all the ways in which they support: outreach messaging, partnerships in information sessions, free application weeks
- The first cohort is overwhelmingly from NC (2 out-of-state students) and majority from WNC, as intended



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# Call to Action for AOTA

- Clarity in marketing the entry-level options for OT education
- Consider highlighting exemplars that have intentional recruitment and enrollment strategies: provide these resources to developing and/or evolving programs
- Partnership with ACOTE and DOE to consider the landscape of professional education and sponsoring innovative public-private collaborations that reduce competition and highlight strengths



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# Gen Z



# Gen Alpha





**Advertising**

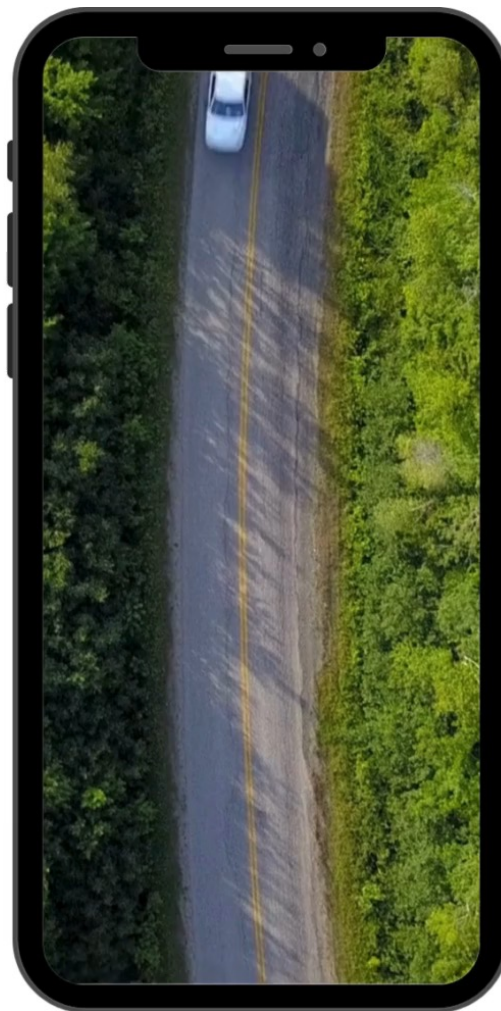


**WHY  
CHOOSE  
OT?**

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# Social Media

## @WhyChooseOT



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# Piloting an Idea with Virginia Schools



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# Find Free Resources at:

# [WhyChooseOT.com/resources](https://www.whychooseot.com/resources)





# Handouts

**Why CHOOSE OT?**

## Help People Live Their Best Lives Become an Occupational Therapy Assistant

Occupational therapy (OT) is a healthcare profession that helps people of all ages participate in the meaningful activities they need and want to do, regardless of injury, disability, or health condition. OT is an inspiring and rewarding profession that combines hands-on care and creative problem-solving to change lives.

**Why Choose Occupational Therapy?**

- Start working as an OTA in 2 years with an associate degree
- Transformational, rewarding work
- Holistic care and meaningful patient relationships
- Diverse career opportunities and settings
- Job stability and growth
- Consistently-evolving field for a dynamic career
- Work-life balance with flexibility

**Median Salary \$63,450 (2022)**

**OT employment is projected to grow by 12% by 2032\***

*"I have a passion for people and a heart for creativity. While the job is to help people in their daily lives, I find that each person I interact with makes a huge impact on my life as well."  
Mory, OTA*

*"I had seen first-hand the life-changing results of OT. The fact that it was an associate degree made it affordable and achievable."  
Elizabeth, OTA*

\*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Why CHOOSE OT?**

## Help People Live Their Best Lives Become an Occupational Therapist

Occupational therapy (OT) is a healthcare profession that helps people of all ages participate in the meaningful activities they need and want to do, regardless of injury, disability, or health condition. OT is an inspiring and rewarding profession that combines hands-on care and creative problem-solving to change lives.

**Why Choose Occupational Therapy?**

- Start working as an OT in 2-3 years after earning your bachelor's
- Transformational, rewarding work
- Holistic care and meaningful patient relationships
- Diverse career opportunities and settings
- Job stability and growth
- Constantly-evolving field for a dynamic career
- Work-life balance with flexibility

**Median Salary \$93,180 (2022)**

**OT employment is projected to grow by 12% by 2032\***

*"Occupational Therapy was a calling for me as it was the only rehab profession that I found to balance the importance of mental, physical and social health in order to promote one's quality of life and independence."  
Lauren, OT*

*"I chose OT because it is a profession that is both a science and an art. The facts and techniques are based in research, however how you apply them can be very creative."  
Colleen, OT*

\*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Why CHOOSE OT?**

## What Is Occupational Therapy?

Occupational therapy (OT) helps people do the things they want and need to do every day. It helps people of all ages, from babies to seniors, with disabilities, injuries, conditions, or illnesses live more independently and enjoy their lives more fully.

**What Are Occupations?**

Occupations are the things you do from the moment you wake up until you go to sleep. Think of them as anything that "occupies" your time during the day—taking care of yourself or loved ones, working, going to school, hobbies—anything you do to live your life.

**How Do Occupational Therapy Practitioners Help People?**

- PHYSICAL GOALS**  
OTs assist people with physical disabilities, injuries, illnesses, or cognitive conditions and help them learn or adapt to do things.
- INTELLECTUAL GOALS**  
OTs help people with developmental differences—such as memory problems, ADHD, or dementia—develop customized skills, interests, and goals.
- SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GOALS**  
OTs support individuals with social-emotional challenges like anxiety, depression, PTSD, or other mental health conditions, by fostering coping skills, self-awareness, regulation, and building relationships.

**Why CHOOSE OT?**

# Presentations

FOR GRADES  
K-5



**OT = Occupational Therapy**

FOR GRADES  
6-8



**OT = Occupational Therapy**

FOR  
HIGH  
SCHOOL



**OT = Occupational Therapy**

FOR  
UNDER-  
GRADS



**OT = Occupational Therapy**





WHY  
CHOOSE  
OT?

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**NACAC**  
National Association for  
College Admission Counseling



[nacacnet.org/nacac-college-fairs/](https://nacacnet.org/nacac-college-fairs/)





[hosa.org/state-conferences/](https://hosa.org/state-conferences/)



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**info@whychooseot.com**



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# 10-minute Break

Issue 3:

# Addressing Student Expectations and Diverse Needs





# Addressing student expectation & diverse needs

Donnamarie Krause, PhD, OTR/L  
October 1, 2024

University of Nevada - Las Vegas

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# The Institution Backdrop - UNLV

- Urban public R1 Minority serving institution
- 3<sup>rd</sup> most diverse in the nation
- International students
- ESL
- Non-traditional students
  - Extended family responsibilities
  - First Gen

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# The Challenge

- Student mental health
  - Post pandemic stressors real
  - High risk populations
- Managing student expectations
- Lack of academic support at doctoral level
- Lack of faculty training – SoTL
- Resources
  - Time
  - Materials

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# Attempted Solutions

- Student workshops
- OSCE
- Listening sessions
- Financial support
- Social support
- Partnering with campus Student Wellness/CAPS
- Faculty Retreat - Training faculty
- Release time for faculty

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# Call to Action for AOTA

- Resources for faculty training – Scholarship of Teaching
- Support for students
- Faculty release-time
  
- Focus on quality of programs



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*“Addressing Student Expectations  
and Diverse Needs”*

Felecia M. Banks, PhD, MEd, OTR/L, FAOTA  
October 1, 2024

Howard University

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# Institutional Context: Howard University

- Howard located in Washington, DC, is a private, culturally diverse, urban, research (high activity) university (residential), that is comprised of 14 schools and colleges with approximately 12,000 students. The university has a hospital, medical school, law school and school of divinity.
- The OT department is one of eight programs in the College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences and is the first established at a Historically Black Colleges Universities (HBCU) in 1974.
- HUOT is the largest supplier of occupational therapists to urban hospitals, schools, and nursing homes in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area.
- The OT department has an entry-level OTD program; 100% online post-professional OTD program, and a 2.5 entry-level MSOT degree program.

# Changing Shift in Student Expectations

- A focus more on value and *consumer-driven education*
  - Cost effectiveness and return on investment
  - *Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model*
  - Grades matter
  - The impact of social determinants of health on diverse students
- A heightened need to address mental health, accommodations and professional behavior
  - The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)- personalization, and social media
  - The demand for tolerance and open-mindedness
  - Increase in community-service and civic engagement

# Solutions Tried: What are We Doing?

- Faculty Awareness Meets and Training
- Curriculum Revision
- Increase Student Support Systems
- Mental Health Training
- Mental Health Day
- Leadership Positions and Program Incentives
- Collaborative Meetings
- Remediation



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# Lessons Learned

- The mental health crisis is much larger than we think
- There is a decline in the confidence of OT education and unrealistic demands of students and faculty
- It is imperative that we adapt to the changing needs of the students

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# Call to Action for AOTA

- A Closer Look at: “*Valued- education*” and how the demands of OT contribute to the national mental health crisis
- A real plan of change to address OT educator’s fears, with solutions to reframe how we market and teach in higher education
- An expansion of global reach, support and cultural adaptation
- More intentional funding opportunities for diverse students



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# Addressing Student Expectations & Diverse Needs

Dale A. Coffin Ed.D., OTR/L  
October 1, 2024



Stony Brook University



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# Frame the Scope of the Challenge SBU

- Stony Brook University is the #1 public university in NYS, the OTD/OTM program sits within the School of Health Professions
- Enrollment consists of mainly middle and lower SES households [Link](#)
- Diverse needs of student body
- Student centric experience
- Student accommodations



# The Great Shift

Teacher  
Centered

- Passive learning instances
- Transmission model of teaching

Student  
Centered

- Partnering & collaborating with students
- Role confusion

Consumer  
Driven

- Transmission is not always uncomplicated
- Customized learning options: More responsibility for engagement with learning



Stony Brook University



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# Solutions Tried

- Scheduling that allows time for work
- Hybrid classes
- Academic support for students & faculty
- Mental Health sessions
- Peer systems
- Intentionality



Stony Brook University



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# Lessons Learned

- You can't please everyone
- Change is hard
- Cultural shift takes about 3-4 years
- Check in on faculty
- Being intentional is necessary
- Address inclusive teaching practices
  - Academic & non-academic challenges
  - Utilize technology in your favor



Stony Brook University



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# Call to Action for AOTA

- PD should require courses in technology and student MH
- Clarification on degrees
- More push for return on investment
- Work together with NBCOT on awareness campaigns



Stony Brook University





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**OT-ALC Day 3 Sponsored Session:**

**Making the Case:**

**Functional Cognition as a Top Priority in  
OT Education, Practice, and Research**