

# Socially Connecting Future Therapists: Harnessing Social Media for Occupational Therapy Graduate Program Recruitment

Rebecca Ozelie, DHS, OTR/L, FAOTA; Annika Knuth, OTDS  
Rush University, Department of Occupational Therapy  
Chicago, Illinois, United States of America

## Background & Objective

- The recruitment challenges faced by OT programs are multifaceted. The national graduate school enrollment crisis has impacted OT programs as there is increased pressure to open new programs to promote the profession, a need for innovation in existing programs, and an overall desire to fill seats to reach program capacity (Harvison, 2024).
- Limited awareness and misrepresentation of occupational therapy contribute to recruitment challenges, as role confusion, overlap with other professions, and insufficient professional advocacy may reduce interest among prospective students.
- Social media is widely used by prospective students and influences enrollment decisions, yet limited research has examined its effectiveness for healthcare and OT program recruitment, highlighting the need to evaluate targeted social media strategies to improve program awareness and engagement.

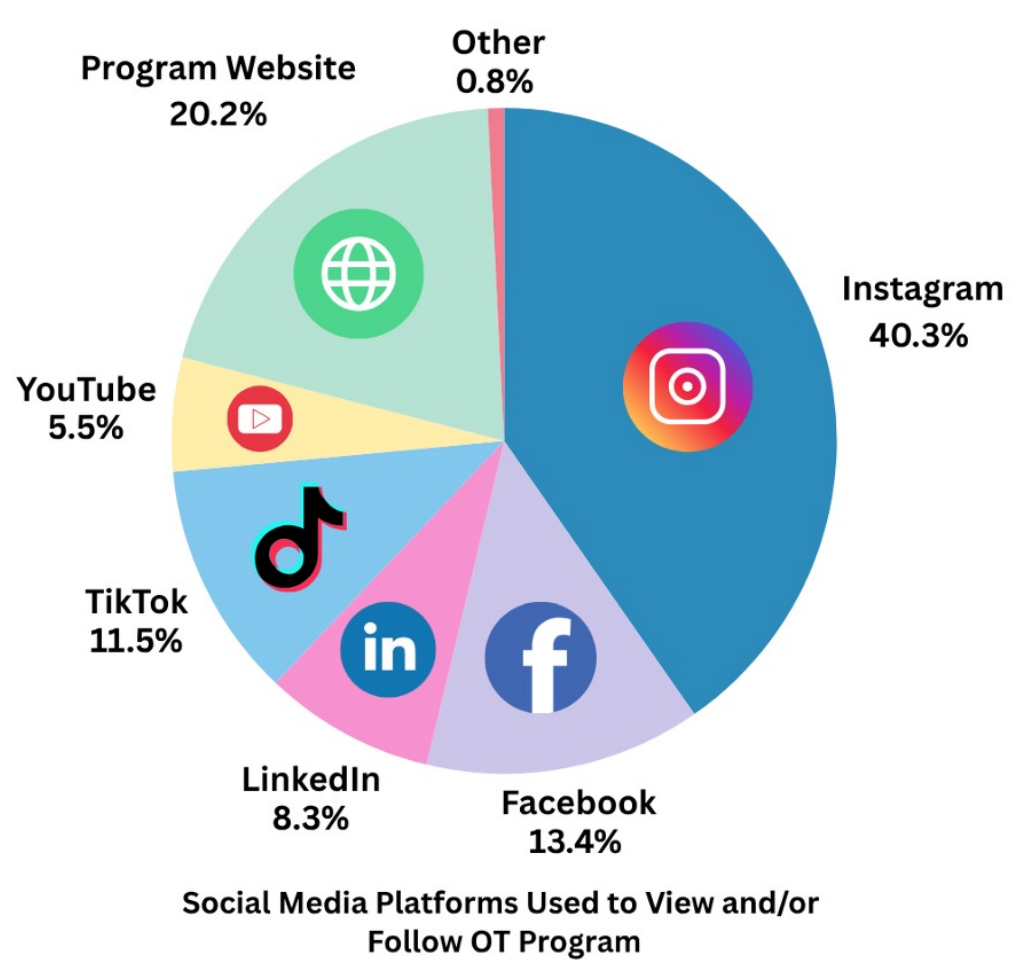
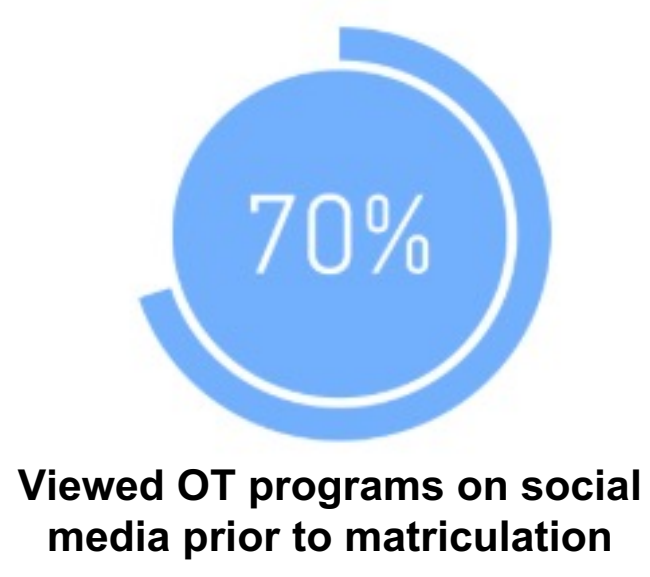
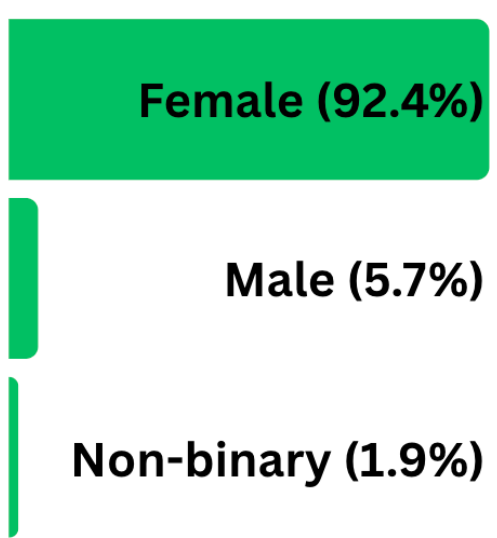
## Objective:

- This study seeks to evaluate OT students' perception of social media recruitment strategies and determine the impact on program awareness.
- Provide valuable insights and practical recommendations for enhancing program visibility, engagement, and ultimately, recruitment success in the digital age.

## Methods

- Cross-sectional survey of current OT graduate students enrolled in or in the process of enrolling in an accredited OT program
- 16 question electronic survey using REDCap

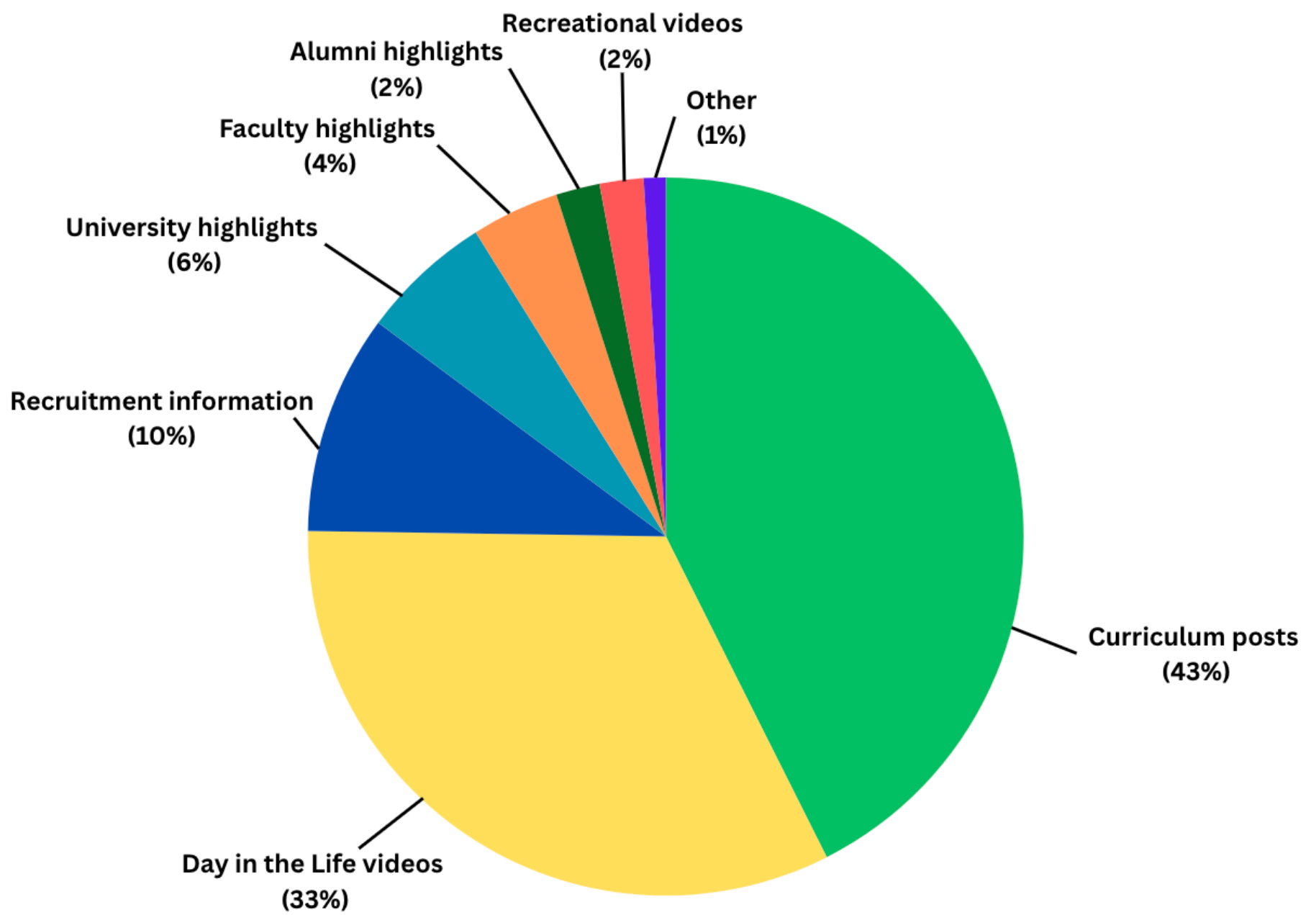
## Results



Rebecca Ozelle, DHS, OTR/L, FAOTA; Annika Knuth, OTDS  
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## Results

**Social Media Content Perceived as Most Impactful by Respondents During the Occupational Therapy Admissions Process**



## Discussion

**Student-Informed Recommendations for OT Program Social Media Content**



### DAY-IN-THE-LIFE CONTENT

- Daily routines of students
- Day on fieldwork/ capstone
- Daily student life including classes, labs and schedules



### PROGRAM & COMMUNITY CULTURE

- Program's community environment and culture
- Faculty highlights and backgrounds
- Program community-building efforts



### STUDENT VOICES & TESTIMONIALS

- Current student advice
- Current student perspective on coursework/fieldwork
- Alumni highlights and outcomes



### TIPS & APPLICATION GUIDANCE

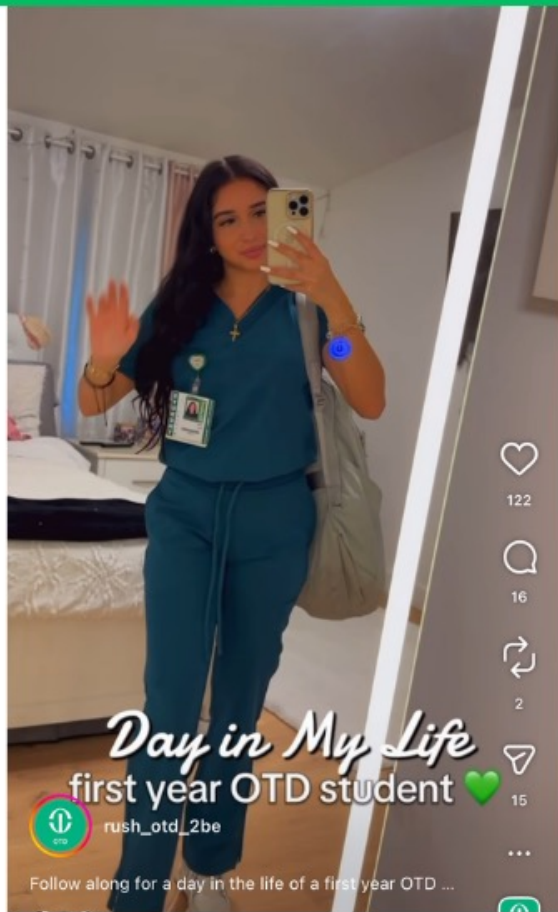
- OTCAS navigation
- "Is OT right for you?" videos

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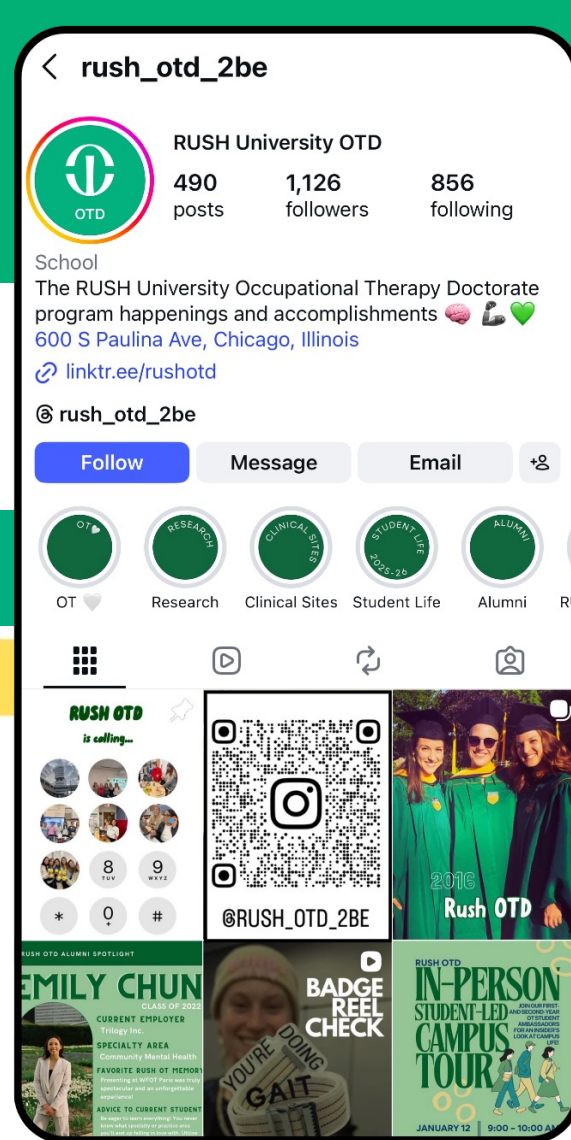
Rebecca Ozelie, DHS, OTR/L, FAOTA; Annika Knuth, OTDS  
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## Discussion

### DAY-IN-THE-LIFE CONTENT



### PROGRAM & COMMUNITY CULTURE



### STUDENT VOICES & TESTIMONIALS



### TIPS & APPLICATION GUIDANCE



## Implications for OT Education

- ✓ Programs should leverage platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to help remain competitive in attracting qualified applicants.
- ✓ Prioritize authentic, student-centered, curriculum related content that highlights the daily realities of student life.
- ✓ Develop social media training and digital literacy as part of faculty and student ambassador training.

### References



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We would like to acknowledge Rush University and Dr. Lauren Little, Assistant Dean of Research for the College of Health Sciences, for their valuable support of this project. We also extend our sincere gratitude to the participants who took the time to share their experiences—this work would not have been possible without their contributions.