

Preparing Occupational Therapists for the Practice of Teaching in Higher Education: Fieldwork and Doctoral Practice Immersions in Pedagogy

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Learning Objectives

1. Define core competencies and key components of immersive educational experiences focused on pedagogy.
2. Identify opportunities to integrate immersive pedagogy-focused practice experiences into curricula.
1. Describe potential rewards and challenges for both faculty and students engaged in developing pedagogical competencies.



Background: Why is This Important?

- The occupational therapy profession continues to struggle with recruiting and retaining faculty.
- Many health professions educators transition into academia without formal preparation, and supporting this transition is important.
- New faculty face challenges related to curriculum development, instructional strategies, and student assessment.
- Survey of 317 OT faculty members revealed the value of guidance and mentoring from experienced faculty members in transitioning from clinical practice to academia.
- Among new faculty in occupational and physical therapy, preparation is associated with job satisfaction.

(Cox, Lewis, & Wyckoff, 2024; Fisher, Dones, Petit-Frere, Dillow & Behler, 2017; Powell, Kanny & Ciol, 2008)





Approach: Experiential Learning in Pedagogy

- Experiential Learning: Learning by Doing (Kolb, 1984)
- Contextualized Learning : Immersive Model (Bream & Gray, 2026)
- Students are assigned to course instructors/teaching teams and involved in “all things teaching-related” (preparation, in-class instruction, office hours, grading, etc.).
- Faculty integrate immersive pedagogy experiences for students in several academic programs.

Entry-Master's Program	Entry-OTD Program	Post-Professional OTD Program	PhD Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began during COVID-19 Pandemic • ACOTE Standards • Level II Fieldwork Modified Competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final (3rd) Year of Curriculum • Level IIB to Doctoral Capstone Pathway • Occupational Science Minor Program (Undergraduate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year-Long OTD Residency in Pedagogy • Entry-OTD Program Courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Experiences Requirement • Scaffolded: Guest Lecture _> In-Class Facilitation -> Teaching> Assistant -> Co-Instructor -> Lead Instructor • Other Academic Programs

Desired Attributes of a Novice Educator

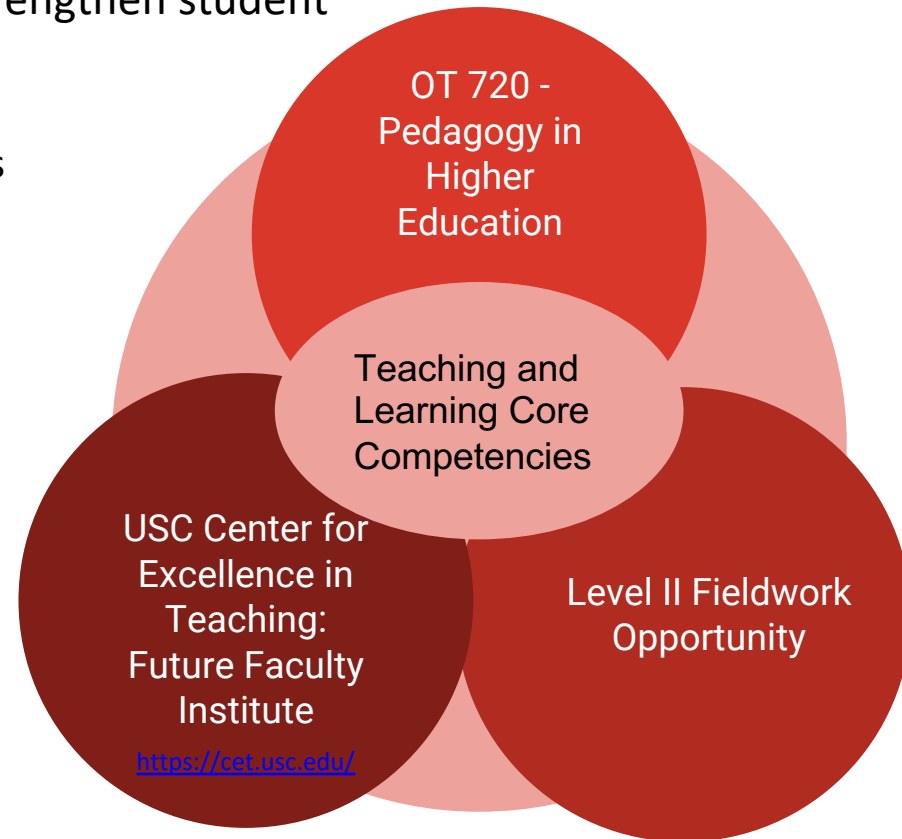
01	Innovator/Visionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begins analyzing curriculum and embraces emerging practice areas and teaching methods
02	Scholar/Explorer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critically applies research, integrates theory and evidence, and models lifelong learning
03	Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates ethical professionalism and supports student development toward leadership and advocacy
04	Integrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments and aligns curriculum with practice
05	Mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serves as a positive role model, encourages mentoring relationships, and reflects on professional growth

(American Occupational Therapy Association, 2009)



Core Competencies of the Students

- Course design and evidence-based teaching practices
- Approaches for creating an inclusive learning environment
- Practical techniques and skills to strengthen student learning
 - developing a course syllabus
 - designing course learning objectives
 - developing effective and inclusive assessments and rubrics
 - grading for equity
 - creating active learning experiences for the classroom
 - interpreting and responding to student evaluations
 - managing group work and peer evaluation
 - planning flipped or hybrid course structures
 - navigating classroom challenges/student concerns
 - exploring innovative approaches to teaching with AI





Faculty Experience

Rewards

- co-creating scholarship and dissemination at conferences
- seeing tangible professional outcomes
- shared learning and collective growth
- authentic participation in the educator role
- innovation through fresh perspectives
- teaching side-by-side

Challenges

- making the implicit explicit
- being questioned - and having to defend decisions
- cognitive and emotional load
- navigating uncertainty together
- time and scheduling

Outcomes

- stronger, more intentional educator identity
- deeper commitment to evidence-based teaching
- expanded openness to innovation
- reframing mentorship as partnership
- systems-level thinking



Student Experience

- Rewards
- Challenges
- Outcomes





Student Experience

Rewards

- leveraging prior clinical knowledge in the classroom to improve learning outcomes for the students
- bridging the theory - practice gap, by helping students process abstract concepts into practical applications
- facilitating the process of student to practitioner utilizing instructional design

Challenges

- Transitioning from “expert clinician” to “educator” in terms of
- slowing down the information taught...making the implicit knowledge explicit
 - scaffolding the learning process
 - accommodating varied learning styles
 - aligning personal clinical experiences with evidence-based practice

Outcomes

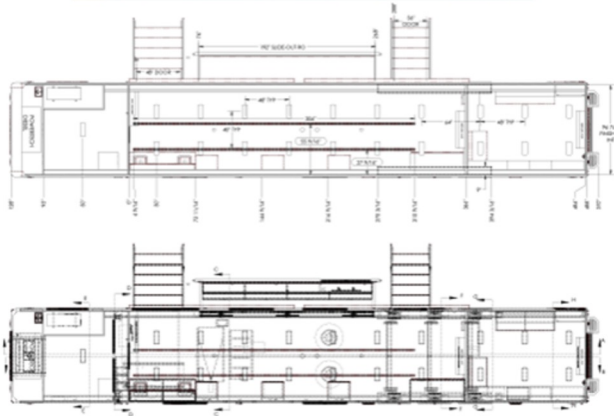
- observable knowledge transfer enhancing a student’s treatment skills
- measurable skills assessed through applied knowledge taught (return demonstration)
- providing students with “real life scenarios” to facilitate problem solving in the acute care setting

Development of PP-OTD Project

**Occupation-
Centered
Simulation
Laboratory** ® -
Pending

PRESENTED BY LISA ERNST NGUYEN, MS,
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THERAPEUTICS, LLC





PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

MOBILE

A mobile simulation lab retrofitted to resemble a fully operational hospital room.

VIDEO PLAYBACK

Video recordings of the simulations will be available to playback for discussion and teaching purposes.

EQUIPMENT

The latest technology with two state of the art Laerdal manikins with software integration to simulate real life situations.

HANDS ON TRAINING

1 Full- time occupational therapist will instruct the course in an intimate setting.



References

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