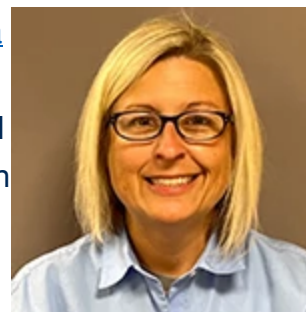




CHAIR'S REPORT

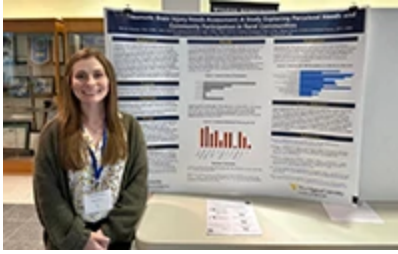
The summer of 2024 marks a period of exciting transitions within the Division of Occupational Therapy. After positive accreditation visits for both OTD and MOT programs and numerous Divisional successes, Dr. Steven Wheeler will continue his collaborative TBI research efforts with the WVU CED while transitioning to a leadership position at the University of Arkansas.

The Division is pleased to announce that [Dr. Amanda Acord-Vira](#) will assume the position of interim Chairperson and lead the next phase of occupational therapy at WVU. Dr. Acord-Vira is a full professor with more than 14 years of experience as a faculty member at WVU. During that time, she has garnered numerous teaching awards, has helped secure more



than \$1 million dollars in funding, and is a former recipient of the Division of Occupational Therapy Outstanding Alumni award. She has more than 25 peer-reviewed publications, including co-authoring two editions of the American Occupational Therapy Association's Occupational Therapy Practice Guidelines for Adults with Traumatic Brain Injury. She has led numerous traumatic brain injury related activities, including the West Virginia Traumatic Brain Injury Program and the West Virginia TBI Advisory

Board. She is a 2002 graduate of West Virginia's MOT program and in 2017, received her EdD degree in Educational Psychology from WVU.



Students interested in brain injury research are mentored by Dr. Acord-Vira and Dr. Wheeler and presented their findings during the [Spring 2024 Conference](#). Dr. Acord-Vira remains instrumental in the WVU Traumatic Brain Injury Conference, which provides education to students, clinicians, and caregivers.

The spring of 2024 marked the graduation of our first class of occupational therapy doctoral students. Numerous students were recognized for their outstanding accomplishments, and Allison Collins was recognized with the 2024 Outstanding Alumni Award. Collins, pictured center, was recognized for her long-standing excellence and support for clinical education.



In April, WVU faculty and students presented nationally at the American Occupational Therapy Association in Orlando, Florida. Faculty and student collaborators provided 4 podium presentations and 8 poster presentations throughout the event. Topics included traumatic brain injury, homelessness, collegiate student athlete mental health, visual impairments, handwriting, student competence in sexual health dysfunction, and student competence in clinical observations and administration of practical exams.

Beginning in the summer of 2024, [Dr. Diana Davis](#), Division of OT Vice Chair and OTD Program Director, assumed her role as [University Faculty Senate Chair](#). In this position, Dr. Davis represents the faculty of West Virginia University, comprising representatives from each academic college and regional campus. As the authoritative faculty body, the Senate guides the academic pursuits of the university, including its campuses, colleges, and schools, and establishes a culture of shared governance regarding faculty roles in university operations.

Based on the dedication to student success, the WVU Division of Occupational Therapy earned ["Best" status from U.S. News & World Report](#).

We hope you'll join us for upcoming local events including our research symposium, WVOTA Conference, virtual journal club, alumni tailgate, and

symposium, WVOTA Conference, virtual journal club, alumni tailgate, and homecoming parade. Mark your calendars to participate in the Professional Programs [now Health Professions] annual alumni tailgate will be Saturday, September 21, 2024, and the Homecoming Parade float on Friday, October 18, 2024. Details will be shared on our website and social media.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Adkins earns multiple recognitions

Students enrolled in the WVU Division of Occupational Therapy benefit from focused pediatric expertise from Assistant Professor [Breanna Adkins, EdD, MOT, OTR/L, BCP, IMH-E](#). Adkins, an alumnus of the Division of OT, has focused her clinical expertise on infant and toddler development.



Recently, Adkins earned the [WV Infant Toddler Mental Health Endorsement](#). This endorsement is internationally recognized to recognize the development and proficiency of professionals who work with or on behalf of pregnant people, young children, birth up to 3 years old, and their families.

Based on her work in the WV Birth to Three network, infant toddler mental health endorsement, work in the [brachial plexus clinic](#), and prior achievement of the board certification in pediatric occupational therapy, Adkins was recognized by Educational Resources Inc. (ERI) with the "B-3 Master Clinician Award" during their inaugural [Birth to Three Conference](#) held April 4-5, 2024. ERI noted that Dr. Adkins' contribution to practice in the B-3 population, her leadership, clinical expertise, and innovative solutions to meet the children's needs and help to improve outcomes are truly inspiring, and we couldn't agree more.

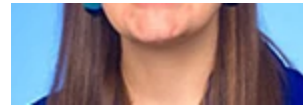
Great work, Dr. Adkins! Thanks for sharing your knowledge and resources with students at WVU.

Gray investigates powered mobility user experiences in assisted living facilities

[Dr. Richelle Gray](#) recently published an article in the Open Journal of Occupational Therapy investigating the routines of powered mobility device (PMD) users in an assisted living facility. The importance of



screening users before implementing a PMD and providing training to all PMD users when provided is indicated. Gray will continue researching powered mobility use thanks to funding through Texas Women's University.



Nolan earns perinatal mental health certification

WVU Division of Occupational Therapy faculty member [Dr. Kayleigh Nolan, PhD, MOT, OTR/L, SCLV, PMH-C](#), is recognized for her work in perinatal mental health. Recently, Dr. Nolan became the first OTP in West Virginia to earn the Perinatal Mental Health Certification (PMH-C) through [Postpartum Support International \(PSI\)](#). This certification recognizes perinatal mental health specialists who have met education, practice, and mental health training requirements and passed a standardized certification exam.



EXPLORE MORE

Better together: Occupational therapy and medical students at the WVU School of Medicine benefit from interprofessional education

To learn more about the current applications of assistive technology, students in the [occupational therapy](#) and [medical degree](#) programs came together for an immersive, hands-on assistive technology walkthrough.



The event was organized and planned by Shayna Rexrode, a student in the [Occupational Therapy Doctorate](#) program. Rexrode was inspired to create the walkthrough after talking with Reagan Sharp, a second-year medical student in the M.D. [Rural Track program](#), about a class she was taking.

Rexrode realized that her OT experience could benefit her peers in other disciplines. She wanted to create a space where students could learn in a collaborative healthcare environment beyond the silo of their expertise. “In the occupational therapy curriculum, assistive technology is often an area of emphasis, and the Division of OT has an impressive collection of technology that they use to educate students,” Rexrode said. “I wanted to help future healthcare providers learn at least one new thing that would

make them a little more prepared to meet the needs of their future patients.”

[Richelle Gray, OTD](#), an assistant professor in the occupational therapy program and certified Assistive Technology Professional, collaborated with Rexrode to help her choose which technology might be most beneficial for the students to view.

“Rexrode reached out to me about this idea, and I was thrilled to be a part of it,” Gray said. “She organized an exceptional teaching event for these students. It was very rewarding to share with medical students how they can support occupational therapists through the referral process and give detailed information on the importance of custom seating for clients.”

Rexrode organized the walkthrough as part of her requirements as a [graduate-level LEND trainee](#) to complete a project on disability identity and inclusion. LEND, which stands for “Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities” is a nationwide program run by the Association of University Centers on Disability.

Scouts explore health professions during Merit Badge University at WVU

Young people across West Virginia and the region recently had the opportunity to learn about health professions from students and faculty at [West Virginia University Health Sciences](#) while earning a merit badge.



On Feb. 24, more than 250 Scouts participated in [Merit Badge University](#), an annual one-day event that provides opportunities for members of Scouts BSA to earn merit badges in a variety of ways. Merit Badge University is sponsored by WVU and the Mountaineer Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Scouts who registered to earn the Health Care Professions Merit Badge worked with representatives from the schools of [Medicine](#), [Nursing](#) and [Pharmacy](#) to learn about 14 disciplines and how health scenarios may be approached by different healthcare practitioners, including Cecelia Simons, pictured above, to learn about the field of occupational therapy.

“This event was so successful because of the exceptional team of healthcare professionals and Scouting leadership,” said [SueAnn Woods](#), associate professor and director of the [Master of Occupational Therapy](#) program, who helped organize the healthcare session. “The event will be

instrumental for both the recruitment of future healthcare practitioners and improved healthcare literacy for all attendees.”

WVU Health Professions provides assistive technology evaluations and recommendations to West Virginia families

[WVU Health Professions](#) partnered with Wheeling University and local assistive technology professionals to host RISE, or Rehabilitation and Integrative Services for Enablement.



During the pilot event, WVU students and faculty were able to evaluate and aid four families, working to provide children with independence in movement and speech through assistive technology equipment such as toys with adapted switches, gait trainers, augmentative communication devices, standing frames with activity tables, powered wheelchairs, and specialized seating and positioning devices.

The goal of the event was twofold. First, to provide assistive technologies to children with multiple disabilities who would benefit from such technology to move, learn and communicate. Second, to provide an interprofessional learning experience for physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech-language pathology students to see all the different areas of assessment for the children.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



[Ben McGurk, MOT, OTR](#), merged his home health background and interest in technology at KanTime Healthcare Software. Here, he focused on promoting a cutting-edge post-acute Electronic Medical Record (EMR)

system designed to reduce documentation time for clinicians in the field. McGurk now serves as VP of Sales for HealthRev Partners. In this role, he works to enhance cash flow for home health and hospice agencies nationwide through effective post-acute coding and revenue cycle management strategies. McGurk embodies the “Mountaineers Go First” motto as he promotes occupational therapy, client care, and healthcare technology throughout the nation.



[Taylor Grout, OTD](#), partnered with the Country Roads program at the WVU Center for Excellence in Disabilities for her capstone and developed a workbook for volunteer peer mentors to better assist the program's

students who have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Grout was hired to continue her work with the Country Roads program and students with disabilities for independence by providing academic courses, social engagement and real-world work experiences.



As an occupational therapist, [Nick Nuzzo, MOT, OTR/L](#), understood that mobility impairments impacted his client's functioning, and often recommended custom wheelchair and seating systems. In 2021 Nuzzo earned

the Assistive Technology Professional, and he now serves clients in outpatient, inpatient, home health, and long-term care throughout the Cincinnati area, serving as an account executive with Sonshine Medical.



[Milena Maragos, MOT, OTR/L, C/NDT](#), is making a difference in the lives of her patients in Greenville, SC. An alumnus of the class of 2017, Maragos has specialized in providing care in skilled nursing facilities and inpatient

rehabilitation. Maragos earned advanced credentials as through the Neuro-Developmental Treatment Association as a Certified Neuro-Developmental Therapist (NDT). Through her advancements, she has been recognized as a "Clinician II" on the Encompass Health Therapy Ladder. Maragos facilitates the stroke support group, teaches education classes to stroke survivors and their families, and facilitates the Parkinson's support group and has authored blog posts for Encompass Health.



Three WVU OT alumni from the class of 2022 are working together at [Positive Steps Therapy](#) (now a part of Ivy Rehab for Kids) in Washington, PA, to provide pediatric therapy services for children and adolescents ages

birth to 21. [Maddy Busky, Meagan Jennings, and Hanna O'Savage](#) report that they've taken their "interprofessional skills and foundational knowledge from our time at WVU to provide team-based holistic care to our pediatric patients." Busky has dedicated her continuing education to upper extremity rehabilitation, O'Savage to emotional regulation and

sensory processing, and Jennings to feeding therapy. Together, this dynamic team provides a broad spectrum of specialization! The alumni noted that they are “so thankful for WVU OT bringing them together and the chance to work alongside each other in this amazing field.”



WVU Division of Occupational Therapy alumnus [Haylee Daniels, MOT, OTR/L, CLT](#), earned a credential in lymphedema therapy. A 2023 graduate, Daniels currently provides occupational therapy services at Logan Regional Medical Center. In addition to her new lymphedema certification, Daniels is also pursuing a doctorate in occupational therapy with anticipated completion in 2025. Great work, Haylee!

Know a WVU OT alumnus who should be featured? [Submit nominations via our online form.](#)

CONNECT WITH US

Our 25th anniversary fundraising continues. We hope that you'll donate and help us reach our goal:

<https://give.wvu.edu/OccupationalTherapy25Years>. Donors of \$250 or more will be recognized on a plaque that is maintained in the OT Lab.

For more information on the WVU Division of Occupational Therapy, [visit our website](#), [follow us on Facebook](#), or [send us an email](#). We look forward to hearing from you. Let's go, Mountaineers!

*[Steven Wheeler, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, CBIS](#)
Professor & Chairman*

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Division of Occupational Therapy

WVU School of Medicine
64 Medical Center Drive | P.O. Box 9100
Morgantown, WV 26506-9600

Phone: 304-293-1953
occupationaltherapy@hsc.wvu.edu

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