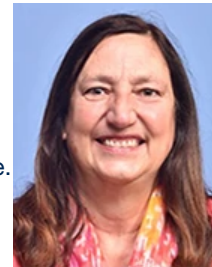




CHAIR'S REPORT

Greetings from Morgantown! I am stepping in to help run the Division of Occupational Therapy during [the illness and absence of Dr. Acord-Vira](#). We appreciate the outpouring of support for her as she battles her illness and hope to have her back at work in the future. In the meantime, I can't say enough about how amazing the faculty have been to step up and cover for the unexpected vacancy. Also, as you know, we were already working with one open faculty position due to the departure of Dr. Wheeler for the University of Arkansas in August. OTs are great at finding adaptive solutions, and we are working our way through the academic year.



I am pleased to share the activities of the faculty and students as presented in the following paragraphs. As you can see, we haven't missed a step in our ongoing pursuit of excellence. To that end, BOTH occupational therapy programs received perfect accreditations, with no citations.

In December 2023, the West Virginia University School of Medicine's [Occupational Therapy Doctorate \(OTD\) program earned the maximum initial accreditation](#) of seven years from the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). The [Master of Occupational Therapy \(MOT\) program was reaccruited](#) in August 2024, extending its accreditation for the next 10 years. The 10-year reaccruited period is the maximum offered by ACOTE. Special thanks to Drs. Davis and Woods, program directors of the OTD and MOT programs, respectively, for organizing the incredibly rigorous self-study report and site visit. I am also pleased to report a 100% board pass rate for our first OTD graduates of 2024.

The search for the next chairperson of the Division of OT is underway with interviews this spring and, hopefully, an appointment announced in late spring or early summer.

Mark your calendars! [WVU Day of Giving](#) is on March 26, 2025. During this 24-hour giving event, you can donate directly to WVU occupational

therapy. Funds will be used to advance education through access to materials and experiential learning opportunities. As the cost of education continues to increase and with the loss of other forms of support from government sources, universities are increasingly passing the cost of education on to students. Particularly in the doctoral program, the financial burden is very high. We really need to provide more scholarships to stay competitive in attracting high-quality students. Any donations are greatly appreciated.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



The WVU Division of Occupational Therapy congratulates [Kayleigh Nolan, PhD, MOT, OTR/L, SCLV, PMH-C, CPRP](#), on earning the credential of Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner (CPRP). This certification builds upon her prior expertise in the Perinatal Mental Health Certification (PMH-C) through Postpartum Support International (PSI). Dr. Nolan is the only OTP with this credential in the state of West Virginia.



[Richelle L. Gray, OTD, OTR/L, ATP/SMS, CDP](#), assistant professor in the WVU Division of Occupational Therapy, has earned the Seating and Mobility Specialist (SMS) certification by the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA). Dr. Gray is the first occupational therapist in West Virginia to earn the ATP/SMS credential.



[B. Seth Powers, MOT, OTR/L, CHI](#), was featured in a WDTV news interview to help prevent fall hand lacerations during pumpkin carving. Pumpkin carving is a fun tradition during fall, but carving does come with risks. Sometimes people can cut their hands and get seriously hurt, leading to significant surgical and rehabilitation needs. Prevention is key! “Some of the ways that people can stay safe are to use the pumpkin carving kits instead of using sharp kitchen knives. These are typically blunt-ended and have serrations on them to make it a little bit safer. Also, just making sure parents are with their children,” Powers said.

EXPLORE MORE

[Occupational therapy students participate in NICU simulation, gain experience in advanced practice setting](#)

Many students report they learn best through active learning — or learning by doing. At the West Virginia University School of Medicine, lab experiences, a hands-on curriculum and simulation training support students’ experiential learning.



“Occupational therapy is a very hands-on profession; therefore, our curriculum must reflect that,” [Breanna Adkins, Ed.D., OTR/L](#), assistant professor in the [Division of Occupational Therapy](#), said. “Our faculty all strive to provide the students with as many hands-on learning opportunities as we can.”



This semester, students in the Division of Occupational Therapy program participated in an immersive NICU simulation experience at the [David and Jo Ann Shaw Center for Simulation Training and Education for Patient Safety \(STEPS\)](#), WVU’s premiere simulation center that provides students with simulated scenarios to grow their skills before engaging in direct patient care.

Megan Martino, an alumna of the WVU [Master of Occupational Therapy](#) program, was a guest lecturer for the simulation. Martino is a certified neonatal therapist at WVU Medicine Children’s Hospital, where she specializes in caring for and providing developmental support to premature and high-risk infants.

“I’m glad to be able to support future OT practitioners in their learning journey, as many others have supported my learning throughout my career,” Martino said. “The ability to support hands-on practice in the STEPs center really helps solidify classroom learning.”

The simulation provided students with an overview of what role an occupational therapist would play in different scenarios within the NICU. To facilitate this experience, a mother-child suite was set up with a NICU patient manikin in an incubator to simulate an infant born at 26 weeks gestation.

Students evaluated the “infant,” assessing things like neurobehavior and musculoskeletal conditions. They also worked as a team to keep the “infant” safe and calm during typical care activities like diaper changes.

Kobey Hawk, a second-year student in the MOT program, is interested in working in pediatrics after graduation. He said this simulation reinforced his choice and gave him experience with a vulnerable population he couldn’t get through classroom instruction alone.

“Participating in the simulation was a great experience that helped me understand firsthand how to handle and interact with a NICU patient,” Hawk said. “I would have never known how to handle a child so fragile without this hands-on experience.”

WVU OT collaboration continues in service dog training program

The Division of Occupational Therapy is excited to continue its collaboration with the [West Virginia University Hearts of Gold Program](#). The Wounded Warrior Service Dog Grant Program has awarded WVU more than \$590,000 to set new industry standards for service dog training and support. With the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs working to expand access to service dogs as a therapeutic resource for veterans with disabilities, this research will be fundamental in



setting guidelines for service dog training and support.

This award is part of a broader initiative that has secured nearly \$3 million in funding for the Hearts of Gold program since 2018, resulting in an expansion of staff, classes and the number of service dogs placed with veterans. The program's mission is simple — to provide WVU students with the rare opportunity to learn about, research and train service dogs specifically for veterans with mobility and psychiatric disabilities.

WVU OT faculty member [Kayleigh Nolan, PhD, MOT, OTR/L, SCLV, PMH-C, CPRP](#), is a collaborator in the project and provides supervision to OTD student research and capstone projects. Occupational therapy faculty and students provide support to the veterans who enroll in the program, including coping, routine establishment with dog care, and adapting the dog training process to maximize the human-dog match.

WVU OT builds Go Baby Go Car for East Dale Elementary OT and PT

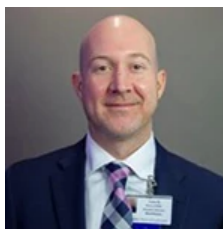


The Division of OT received a power ride-on car donation from University Motors Mercedes Benz of Morgantown. This car was modified for [WVU Go Baby Go](#) by occupational therapy students. Modifications included a moveable hand switch to power the car and postural supports. These changes enable children who may not normally be able to operate a ride-on toy car to have the opportunity to play. This car was donated to East Dale Elementary School in Marion County, West Virginia, to be incorporated in school-based occupational therapy and physical therapy intervention sessions with WVU alumni Crystal Bennington (occupational therapy) and Audra Moore (physical therapy), pictured alongside Principal Erin Board.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



[Jessie Parkulo, MOT, OTR/L, BCP](#) carries her Mountaineer pride with her to Indianapolis, Indiana. Since graduating in 2017, Parkulo has provided occupational therapy services in a variety of pediatric settings, including early intervention, outpatient, ABA center, Montessori school, and currently a public school district. In 2022, Parkulo launched [Mountaineer Therapy](#), a pediatric community-based occupational therapy practice for clients ages 5-22. She's a board-certified pediatric occupational therapist (BCP), a credential earned by less than 1% of occupational therapists.



WVU OT alumnus [Luke Davis, MBA, OTR/L](#), joins the Board of Directors for the American Parkinson Disease Association Rhode Island Chapter. Davis is the Regional Director of Rehabilitation at Spaulding Rehab Network and brings a wealth of experience in OT, healthcare administration, business, disability services and community engagement. Building upon his clinical background in occupational therapy, Davis brings a solid understanding of the clinical implications of Parkinson's disease.

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

CONNECT WITH US

We hope you'll join us on [WVU Day of Giving](#) on March 26, 2025. Connect with the Division of Occupational Therapy and the Student Occupational Therapy Association on social media using the buttons below for more information about news and events.

Let's go, Mountaineers!

[MaryBeth Mandich, PT, PhD](#)

*Vice Dean, Professional & Undergraduate Programs
West Virginia University School of Medicine*

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Support Occupational Therapy

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