

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, DOMINGUEZ HILLS

Spring

2025

NEWSLETTER

DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER

DEPARTMENT OF
OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY



WELCOMING MSOT C21

The CSUDH occupational therapy department welcomed the 21st MSOT cohort in January of 2025. The two-day orientation was comprised of one virtual day and a second day on-campus. The collective C21 was able to meet each other for the first time in person, participate in team-building activities, tour the campus and learn more about the program.

We look forward to all the amazing accomplishments of this new cohort!



In this Issue...

C21 Orientation &
Red Shirt
Ceremony

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Conference

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C19 Grad
Banquet &
Commencement

... and more!

C21 ORIENTATION



ORIENTATION CO-CHAIRS

"Serving as a co-chair for the C21 orientation alongside Bianca was a truly rewarding and seamless experience from beginning to end. Hearing from our esteemed speakers as they welcomed the new cohort filled me with enthusiasm for the future of occupational therapy. During the campus tour and lunch, I had the opportunity to meet several students from C21, which brought back memories of my own first-day nerves just a year ago. While I could sense their anxiety, it was clear that each individual possesses the determination and potential to thrive in this program and become exceptional future clinicians. I hope that we were able to offer valuable guidance and that their time at CSUDH will be a memorable and enriching journey!"

- Britney Tang, MSOT, C20

"Being able to have the opportunity as co-chair for the C21 orientation alongside Britney was a highlight of my experience here at CSUDH. From the moment I stepped into this role, I knew I wanted to help create a welcoming, passionate, and inclusive environment for our incoming cohort. It was an incredible honor to be part of the first chapter of their journey, knowing the significance of this milestone. Having been in the program for just over a year, I understand firsthand the excitement and uncertainty that comes with starting this path. It's a time filled with anticipation, growth, and new experiences. Standing beside my co-chair and our remarkable department, I hoped to not only share insights but also inspire confidence in each student's ability to navigate this journey successfully. More than anything, I wanted them to know they are stepping into a community that supports and uplifts one another. Seeing their enthusiasm and determination reminded me why I chose this profession in the first place. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to support our future colleagues as they begin this new chapter."

- Bianca Zaragoza, MSOT, C20
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Annual CSUDH OT TAMALIZA

February 1, 2025

Our Tamaliza event was truly one for the books! Getting together outside of school to make tamales was not only a delicious experience, but a meaningful one too. From spreading the masa to folding the husks, there was laughter, music, and plenty of teamwork involved. It was a great way to unwind, mingle, and bond with classmates and friends in a relaxed setting.

- Kenia Carrillo, MSOT, C20



My experience with making tamales with other OT students was really fun. It gave me a great opportunity to get closer with students from C20 and I was able to talk about classes they previously took and what their experience was so far in the program. I also had a really great time wearing the CSUDH OT apron!

- Regina Catanyag, MSOT, C21



I loved the tamaliza event, and I even got a free apron from the drawing! It was such a fun way to bond with other fellow OT students across cohorts and also faculty. The tamales also turned out amazing, I think it's because they were made with love by everyone! I'm really glad I came out for it and would definitely attend again if another one is hosted.

- Katherine Nguyen, MSOT, C20



2025 FIELDWORK EDUCATORS WORKSHOP

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, ETHICS AND FIELDWORK

FEBRUARY 7, 2025

The CSUDH Occupational Therapy Department was pleased to host our annual Fieldwork Educators Workshop on February 7, 2025. Our topic this year was "Occupational Therapy, Ethics and Fieldwork" and focused on ethical situations experienced in fieldwork and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in fieldwork. Guest speakers were Dr. Lora Woo, Dr. Sheryl Ryan and Dr. Daniel Swiatek, all faculty members at CSUDH.



In her presentation titled: "Back to Basics: AOTA's Code of Ethics. Moral Courage in Action," Dr. Woo reviewed the AOTA Code of Ethics including the Core Values, Principles and Standards of Conduct. She then presented several examples of how the principles would be applied and provided ethical dilemmas for discussion. Attendees then participated in a short quiz on the AOTA Code of Ethics answering the quiz questions using a "scratcher card" in an activity very similar to how our students learn about ethics in Dr. Woo's classes.

The final application of the information involved individual groups reviewing and discussing an ethical dilemma and determining which solution (A, B or C) best addressed the dilemma. By holding up

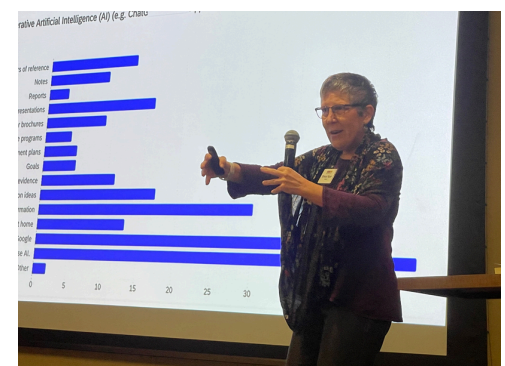


placards with the letters, groups shared their decisions with others. A breakout session with Dr. Gina Phelps and Dr. Lisa Hiestand provided more opportunities to discuss ethical dilemmas experienced at different sites. Several attendees reported in the survey that the sessions were a good reminder to refer to the AOTA Code of Ethics and reflect on how to incorporate the values and principles into practice. When asked if their approach or perspective regarding ethical dilemmas would be different than before the workshop, 87% of attendees said that it would be and provided many examples for fieldwork.

During his breakout sessions, Dr. Swiatek asked the question, "What's Inside the California Occupational Therapy Practice Act? It's Your Responsibility to Know." He reviewed several pertinent regulations from the California Code of Regulations.



Prior to the workshop, attendees were asked to take a survey about their experience in the use of AI. More than 70% reported little to no experience with AI and only 8 respondents reported having an AI policy at their site. Dr. Ryan's presentation, "AI in OT Fieldwork: Navigating the Promise and Pitfalls", showed how AI is changing healthcare and the workplace. She discussed the limitations, pitfalls and tradeoffs of using AI and encouraged participants to consider implementing an AI policy at their sites. During her breakout sessions, "AI Sandbox: Experimenting with Tech Tools", Dr. Ryan provided several opportunities for attendees to learn how to critique AI-generated intervention plans, goals, SOAP notes and assessment plans. She also provided resources for writing AI policies. In the post survey, most respondents reported that they felt more clear about communicating with students or making choices about when to use AI in fieldwork.



The OT fieldwork team values our fieldwork educators and appreciates that they are willing to attend our workshops in person and collaborate with each other to provide truly meaningful learning experiences for our students. Thank you!

OTAC TEA WITH A SCHOLAR

FEBRUARY 15, 2025



Attending the 2025 OTAC Tea with a Scholar event was a great experience. I have always been curious about how occupational therapy is applied in different cultural settings, and Dr. Bonnie Nakasuji's presentation regarding cultural humility was very insightful. Her descriptions and reflections of her multiple times in Ghana encouraged me to think beyond my values shaped by my own cultural background. One point that really stuck with me was how perspectives on time can vary based on cultures. In one Ghana community, for instance, attending to an urgent need in the village might take priority over being on time for an OT appointment. In one specific case, a client was even several hours late to meet with Dr. Nakasuji. Knowing that different cultures may prioritize different things can remind occupational therapists to be patient, flexible, and communicative with their clients in order to provide them with optimal care. Additionally, throughout the event, I had the chance to meet multiple occupational therapy professionals and students who were all so kind and genuine. It was cool seeing a variety of passionate OTs attending this event, from seasoned therapists and professors to retirees. This was the 21st OTAC Tea with a Scholar event, and I was impressed to hear that some of them had participated since the first Tea with a Scholar in 2001! Overall, I left this event with more exposure to the warmhearted OT community, as well as a deeper appreciation and understanding for cultural fluidity in occupational therapy. I enjoyed my time there, and I look forward to the continuation of this yearly OTAC Tea with a Scholar tradition!

- Emily Ye, MSOT, C21

I am very grateful to be able to attend the OTAC Tea with a Scholar and listen to Dr. Nakasuji speak about cultural fluidity and cultural humility within OT. As a first year MSOT student that just started graduate school, it was an amazing experience to hear a professional discuss a topic that we had just gone over in class last week. I was able to better understand the concept of cultural fluidity and how it is dependent on a level of professional humility. Cultural fluidity is not something that can be mastered but a skill that demands continuous participation. I loved learning about the growth that has occurred within our profession. It was exciting to understand how my future career actually applied a holistic approach. When practicing therapy, we cannot just subscribe to the idea of a single story. I also enjoyed being able to participate and getting to know the different members within the OT community in our area. This was the first professional OT event I attended, and it was inspiring to see the many different backgrounds within our community. Listening to Dr. Nakasuji's experiences definitely broadened my idea of what was possible within the guidelines of OT and also gave me a better understanding of how much our practice benefits the community and vice versa. I had a great experience that allowed me to learn more about the career and meet the people that make up this lovely field over some warm tea and delicious snacks.

- Christo Francis, MSOT, C21



CSUDH STUDENT RESEARCH COMPETITION

MARCH 4-6, 2025

2nd Place Graduate Oral Health, Nutrition, and Clinical Science	Elena Murray, Kaylena Ledoux, Kacie Lackey, and Yaset Magdeleno	Technology and Independent Health Management: Perceptions of Older Adults
1st Place (tie) Graduate Oral Social and Behavioral Science I Asian Pacific Student Research Award	Alyanna Kayla Paulino, Giselle Santos & Tracy Nguyen	Predictors of Health-Related Quality of Life Amongst Filipino- American Caregivers of Older Adults
1st Place Graduate Oral Social and Behavioral Sciences II	Vivian Du, Larissa Bolanos, Cecilia Ceballos, and Hannah Garcia	The Narrative of Pet Owners and Their Perception of Chronic Pain
2nd Place Graduate Oral Social and Behavioral Sciences II	Madeline Neal, Jasmine Ho, Sidney Hsu, and Nadine Herrera	Adolescents' Experiences as Language Brokers
1st Place Graduate Oral Education	Breck Burwell, Maria Astudillo, Jessica Altobelli, and Jillian Caro	Coping Strategies Among First- Generation College Students and the Perceived Impact on Academic Performance
2nd Place Graduate Oral Education	Alexa Martinez, Hallie Kaichi, and Naomi Kruzic	The Process of Learning and Implementing Cultural Sensitivity in Occupational Therapy

Outstanding Faculty Mentor Award

I was surprised and humbled to be honored with an Outstanding Faculty Mentor award at Student Research Conference (SRC) 2025. This year marked the 20th anniversary of the SRC, and our OT department has been centrally involved since the beginning. Drs. Claudia Peyton, Terry Peralta-Catipon, and Heather Kitching all preceded me in developing the tradition of all the MSOT qualitative research teams presenting their studies at SRC. I'm so happy to be continuing the tradition! We had our first OTD student qualitative study presentation this year as well. The award has my name on it but it really belongs to the hard work and dedication to research of our whole department over all these years.

-Dr. Sheryl Ryan



GUEST LECTURING FOR ORTHOTICS AND PROSTHETICS

Dr. Mojtaba Kamyab and Professor Ava Herbrick from the CSUDH Orthotics and Prosthetics (O&P) Program have been collaborating with our program for a few years by guest speaking during the pediatric or adolescent interventions course and asking CSUDH OT Students to act as standardized patients for the O&P competencies.

In February 2025, O & P invited Dr. Faith Moy to guest speak at one of their first-year classes on fine motor development and the interventions Occupational Therapists might use to work on fine motor development.



After we went over some major patterns for grasp and pinch, O&P students were challenged to identify the fine motor grasp and pinch using fine motor activities that included blocks, soapy foam, Squigz, and more. Can you tell which fine motor activity they enjoyed the most from the photo?

CITY OF CARSON AUTISM ACCEPTANCE 5K



CSUDH's Occupational Therapy Program was represented at the City of Carson Autism Acceptance 5K where we had a booth on Saturday, April 5th. Volunteers arrived at 6:00am and included those from OTD C1 (Nancy Ascensio), MSOT C14 (Alums Danielle Ballard and Professor Elysia Aguero), MSOT C19 (Kaitlyn Do), MSOT C20 (Emily Chang, Vivian Du, Tamaki Trexler), and Dr. Faith Moy.

We were able to speak with participants and caregivers about Occupational Therapy and services Occupational Therapists can provide. We also encouraged adults and teens to join our CSUDH programs at the Carson Community Center.



The main attraction at our booth was slime making. We engaged with participants who were new to making/touching slime to experts who shared their slime making tips. It was great to see the expressions of surprise and joy as the secret slime activator was added. The presence of Occupational Therapy was felt by many.

AOTA INSPIRE

Annual Conference

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
April 3-6, 2025

CSUDH Representation

Our very own Luke Waldschmitt, Bryan Ha and Gabriel Yabut from MSOT C19 (missing Vanessa Rodriguez) presented their research titled "Correlation Between Professional Quality of Life, Perceived Social Support, Self-Efficacy, Financial Well-being and Life Satisfaction Among Occupational Therapy Entrepreneurs" in the poster sessions at the AOTA Inspire Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Way to represent CSUDH!



AOTA Volunteerism

By: Laura Deary, BS, COTA/L, ROH

Back in 2007, I was asked to be a part of the AOTA Local Conference Committee when AOTA's Annual Conference was being held in Long Beach in 2008. Specifically, I was co-chairing the "People Power" position with Dr. Joan Surfus and we were responsible for all conference volunteers who had to scan attendees in (and out) of courses. It was 6 invigorating and exhausting days that turned out to be the start of what I call the best volunteer gig in OT!

Since then, we have been asked back every year traveling to Orlando twice, Philadelphia 3 times, Indianapolis, San Diego, Baltimore, Nashville, Chicago, Salt Lake City, New Orleans, San Antonio, and Kansas City. I wish I could say I saw lots of each city instead of just the inside of the Convention Centers – but truly, I cannot muster up a complaint. The energy one feels at Conference is palatable. Occupational therapy practitioners from all over the US and abroad convene for networking, education, and fun. Sure – some attendees have work meetings – but as OTPs, we must find balance! I have seen many changes over the years (no one gets scanned in and out of courses anymore!) and volunteers no longer have to wear pageant-like sashes. In fact, room volunteers get a really cool, bright orange "Ask Me" shirt to keep!

My hope is that many students (and alumni) take advantage of attending next year's AOTA Inspire 2026 Annual Conference in Anaheim. Whether you present a poster or course, volunteer, or decide to register and attend 1 or all 3 days – the important part is to SHOW UP. We don't get this opportunity many times on the West Coast...and you never know when a short-term volunteer gig might turn into something really big!



CSUDH Alumni Reception

Attending the CSUDH alumni reception at AOTA 2025 was an energizing and powerful reminder of the legacy built by the university and the OT department. As an alumna, I felt deeply proud to represent the work I've been doing and to see how the next generation of clinicians and scientists step into their careers with confidence. I left feeling hopeful for the future of our profession and proud to be part of a program that empowers students to lead with purpose and heart

- Vanessa Yanez, PhD, MSOT, OTR/L, (CSUDH MSOT Graduate '14)



Institute for Future Scientists

Cherry (Lopez) and I were invited to AOTA Inspire to participate in AOTA's *Institute for Future Scientists*. We kicked off our first day attending several seminars. Including *Breakfast with a Scholar*, where we met with the other future scientists from across the U.S., and ended with a seminar where principal investigators spoke about their research in COVID. What I appreciated most about this program was the second day, where a group of 30 students had the chance to ask a panel of several researchers about their experiences. I was amazed to see how many OTs perform research in intellectual disabilities and hands, as these are both interests of mine. It was a great opportunity to network and gain guidance on how to pursue a career in research as an occupational therapist.

Cherry and I also had the opportunity to check out Expo! My favorite part about Expo was connecting with an occupational therapist who specialized in dementia care, as this directly related to my Capstone topic and deeply resonated with my passions. Caring for my grandmother who had a stroke and dementia was one of the reasons I chose to pursue OT.

I'd like to say thank you so much to Dr. Ryan for informing me about this opportunity and to Dr. Becerra-Culqui for your letter of support and guidance in pursuing research!

- Dominique Soriano, MSOT C20



<https://inspire.aota.org/>

SPRING 2025

MINDFULNESS SESSION

By Professor Elysia Aguero



MSOT C20 and OTD C2 had the opportunity to participate in a sound bath as part of our Fieldwork Wellness Thread, coordinated by Professor Elysia Aguero and Academic Fieldwork Coordinators, Amber Borchert and Abbie Bryant. The sound baths were provided by our wonderful volunteers, Lizzy Rios and Yuka Obayashi. They each curated a unique 1-hour experience,

filling the room with sounds using a variety of instruments including a mixed seed chime, rain stick, ocean drum, and crystal singing bowls. Students shared that they enjoyed the experience and found it to be soothing and relaxing. Thank you, Lizzy and Yuka, for sharing your time and expertise with our graduate students!



C19 FOCUS GROUP & CAREER PREPARATION

On April 30, 2025, the MSOT students of C19 returned to campus—many for the first time since completing their didactic coursework the previous summer—for a full day of career-focused events designed to support their transition from students to professionals.

The day began with a focus group, facilitated by Dr. Kitching, where students from C19 had the opportunity to provide valuable feedback and insight on the MSOT curriculum and fieldwork experience. The morning continued with an informative employer panel featuring:

- Bob Candari from Eisenhower Health,
- Mary Kay Gallagher from Gallagher Pediatric Therapy, and
- Lora Woo from CCS Los Angeles.

Panelists shared their expertise and answered questions on employment, job searching and interview strategies.

Following the employer panel, Felicia Hernandez, the Director of Alumni Relations, addressed the soon-be-graduates, highlighting the benefits of staying connected through the CSUDH Alumni Association. The morning concluded with an insightful presentation by Austin Porter, Interim Executive Officer of the California Board of Occupational Therapy (CBOT), who walked students through the licensure process.

We extend our sincere thanks to all speakers and participants for their contributions in supporting the professional growth of our graduating students.



ANNUAL CAREER FAIR

Career Fair Highlights: Building Futures in OT Through Community Partnerships

Our recent Occupational Therapy Graduate Program Career Fair was a resounding success, bringing together students and representatives from 22 community partner organizations dedicated to advancing the OT profession. This vibrant event provided a dynamic platform for students to explore diverse career pathways,

network with experienced practitioners, and gain insights into real-world opportunities. We are deeply grateful to our community partners for their ongoing support and commitment to the CSUDH OT department and to the future of the occupational therapy profession.

Mentorship in Level II Fieldwork

Clinical Instructor & Student Perspectives

Every year, I am given the opportunity to take on fieldwork students and I take on this responsibility with gratitude and diligence. These students are going to be the future of our profession, and I believe it is important to lay a strong foundation that will allow them to thrive as occupational therapists for the betterment of our profession and society. During my experience as a fieldwork educator in an acute care hospital, my students have been eager to learn, have been receptive to feedback, and possessed a strong desire to become entry level practitioners by the end of their rotation. In return, I will do my best to make the chart review digestible and clearly explain how the information we gather is pertinent to our role as occupational therapists. Being a fieldwork educator not only allows me to give back to the profession, but it also allows me to continue to grow as an occupational therapist because there is always room to learn new information and apply the knowledge into practice. I look forward to taking on future CSUDH students because I was once in their position and will do my best to make their experience as seamless as possible.

James Kim, OTR/L, MSOT, C12

My experience in acute care with adults and geriatrics for level IIA was very reaffirming as to why I chose to pursue OT, especially because acute care has always been an interest of mine. My favorite part was bridging the language barrier gap and providing OT services to Spanish speaking patients and seeing them light up because someone spoke and understood their language and culture. My site was immensely supportive and provided a variety of continuous learning opportunities as a student to gain as much exposure in 12 weeks. My FWE, James, truly prepared me in feeling confident as an entry level acute care practitioner by the end of my rotation and fostered an enjoyable and conducive learning environment to enhance my clinical reasoning, medical knowledge, and clinical skills as a whole. I am very grateful to my site and FWE for giving me an unforgettable and encouraging fieldwork experience!

Samantha Leggis, OTD, C1



Pictured (Left to Right); Ciara Nagao MSOT, C15, Samantha Leggis, OTD, C1, and James Kim, MSOT, C12



Semester Newsletter

5/2025

@sotacsudh

Spring Semester

SPRING 2025 NEWS N' EVENTS

SOTA LA Fires Relief Outreach



1/25: Out of concern for the Los Angeles Fire impacting our community, SOTA organized a volunteering event to help an organization called 9thirtyLA in downtown Los Angeles. 9thirtyLA is actually an event space and warehouse that had been converted into a distribution hub for donations.

People would drop off any donations for volunteers to sort into packages based on requests from those affected by the fires. Then, other volunteers would drive those packages to families directly or to other distribution centers more local to the affected areas. SOTA arrived in groups and helped with sorting and packing donations as orders came in. It was great to see that so many people wanted to help, and it was inspirational to see the way that 9thirtyLA had created this system of organization and efficiency. After a couple of hours of hard work, SOTA volunteers left sweaty, dusty, and feeling good about taking tangible actions to benefit our community.

SOTA x ICOT Valentine's Grams



2/12: SOTA and ICOT collaborated for a sweet Valentine's event! Each valentine gram came with an occupational therapy inspired pick-up line and random heart shape capped pen. Spreading the love for our most important ADL!



SOTA Picnic in the Park



3/15: SOTA hosted a picnic at Don Knabe where everyone was invited to bring their own blanket, bites, and beverages! Both MSOT C21 and OTD C2 wrapped up their Range of Motion, Manual Muscle Testing, and Sensory Testing competency exams earlier in the week and celebrated with a well-deserved break! Students all enjoyed a day of fun in the sun after a gloomy and stormy week with homemade and purchased snacks and drinks. Everyone enjoyed playing basketball, spike ball, and board games provided by other students. There were even a couple of pups that joined in on the fun! It was a great day to relax and enjoy time together between sections and cohorts outdoors.

A few of our OT students from both MSOT and OTD cohorts. We hope you all had fun in the sun after competency exams! (:



SOTA Members Only Movie Night



3/23: SOTA held a members only movie outing and rented an entire movie theater at Marina Marketplace AMC to watch Mickey 17. Around 20 of our SOTA members came to enjoy the entire theater to themselves.

Attendees included students from all cohorts currently on campus: C20, C21, and C2! The movie was entertaining, and the event felt cozy and fun. After the movie was done, everyone hopped over to the local pub nearby to continue hanging out and chatting.





SOTA Free Opportunity Drawing Fundraiser

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE

CSUDH SOTA

WIN A SUMMER PARKING PASS

WINNER OF THE DRAWING
ANNOUNCED MAY 5

DEADLINE TO ENTER: MAY 4 11:59 PM

\$3/1 ENTRY OR \$5/2 ENTRIES

SOTA MEMBER: +1 FREE ENTRY WITH ANY PURCHASE



SCAN THE QR
CODE TO ENTER

4/18-5/5: SOTA hosted a free opportunity drawing fundraiser with the grand prize being a Summer 2025 Parking Pass!

Congratulations to our following winners:

- Brittany Duong, C20 S3
- Breck Burwell, C20 S1
- Nadine Herrera, C20 S2
- Mike Hendrickson, C20 S2
- Macarena Blando Demarco, C21 S1

The winning draw prizes were as follows:

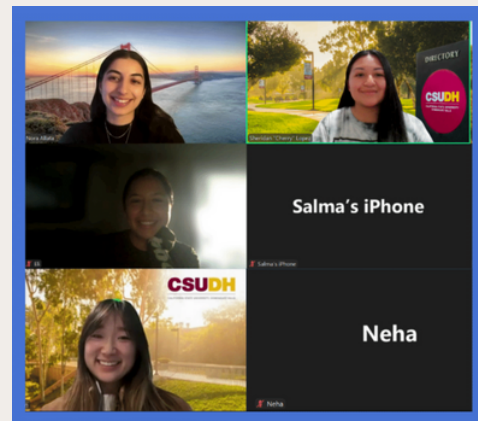
- First Place Prize:** 2025 Summer Parking Pass (\$122 value)
2 Second Place Prizes: Cardinal Red Zip-up Jacket (\$45 value, each)
2 Third Place Prizes: CSUDH OT Dad Hat (\$25 value, each)

PAINT & PLANT WORKSHOP WITH COMMUNITY LOVING

On March 1st, COTAD had the pleasure of partnering with Community Loving, a local grassroots organization dedicated to serving families in the South Bay with essential resources. Together, we hosted a Paint & Plant Workshop aimed at promoting unity and celebrating diversity through an engaging, occupation-based activity - paints and planting! In a time when DEI initiatives are facing challenged nationwide, this event was a powerful reminder of how art and nature can bring people together. We were thrilled to see both kids and adults participating in the event. Some painted, some planted, and many did both! It was an amazing opportunity to connect with out local community. A huge thank you to our Professors Dr. Tracy Becerra-Culqui, Dr. Faith Moy and Dr. Gina Phelps for their generous donations of soil, planters and succulent cuttings. Their support helped make this event possible! We also wanted to give a special shout out to our President, Cherry, and Secretary, Gina, for volunteering their Saturday, just before a neuro practicum, to serve and support families in Carson. We're so grateful for the opportunity to give back to our community and can't wait for our next event! Stay tuned for more events from COTAD.



ZOOM GUEST SPEAKER: EXPERIENCES OF A MUSLIM OT STUDENT



On March 18th, since this is the month of Ramadan, we hosted a guest speaker event to uplift and amplify the voices of women and Muslim communities. Our guest speaker was Nora Allata, a Muslim occupational therapy student at USC. She took the time out of her spring break, while fasting, to share her personal experiences and offer valuable insights into the challenges many Muslims face in healthcare and education. She educated us on Muslim practices during Ramadan and how to be an ally to the Muslim community amid increasing Islamophobia. As OTs, occupational justice is at the heart of what we do so it's essential to create space for everyone. Thank you everyone who attended!

AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH SLIME WORKSHOP



April 12, 2025

In honor of Autism Acceptance Month, we partnered with Community Loving to host another FREE sensory slime workshop for a beautiful day of creativity, connection, and community. We rolled up our sleeves, and got messy with colorful, calming slime while making space for real conversations about neurodiversity. It wasn't just about the slime, it was about recognizing that Autism isn't something to fix, and affirming that every neurotype belongs. A huge thank you to Dr. Faith Moy for donating and preparing the slime materials as well as helping with set up and breakdown during the event.

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER X WOMEN'S SELF- DEFENSE SEMINAR

April 16, 2025

In recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, COTAD partnered with the CSUDH Women's Resource Center to co-host a powerful Women's Empowerment Self-Defense Workshop. The event began with an impactful discussion led by WRC leader Alyeska, who addressed the harsh realities many women face regarding assault and violence. Following the conversation, COTAD President Cherry—also a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu practitioner and former amateur MMA fighter—led an engaging self-defense session focused on distance management and the power of using your voice. Participants enjoyed hands-on learning, felt empowered, and left eager for more!

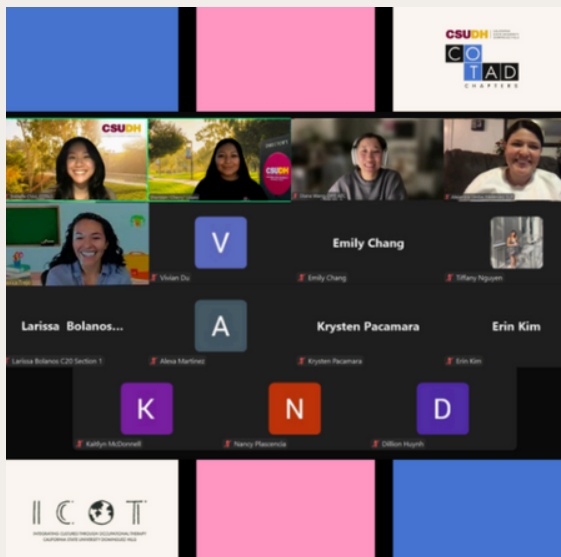


COTAD X ICOT

SPRING EVENTS N
HAPPENINGS

COTAD X ICOT ZOOM PANEL: WOMEN IN HEALTHCARE

On March 27th, in celebration of Women's Month, COTAD and ICOT hosted a Zoom panel event titled "Women in Healthcare." We were joined by a group of female healthcare professionals, including two Speech & Language Pathologists (SLPs), one Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA), and one Doctor of Physical Therapy/Athletic Trainer (DPT/ATC). Together, they shared their lived experiences of navigating male-dominated spaces in the healthcare field and balancing multiple roles as women. With an impressive turnout of 16 students, the discussion provided valuable insights into the challenges and triumphs women face in healthcare professions. Despite the ongoing challenges posed by DEI rollbacks, attendees left the event feeling empowered and motivated, knowing that, as women, we can continue to support and uplift each other during these difficult times. It was a day of solidarity and inspiration, reminding us of the strength and resilience we share.



COTAD X ICOT EMPOWER YOGA WORKSHOP FOR LONG BEACH WOMEN'S SHELTER



On Friday, March 28th, OTD students teamed up with COTAD and ICOT for a donation-based workshop, Empower Yoga, in honor of Women's Month. The event, hosted in collaboration with local women-owned Ritual Cafe, raised \$60 for the Long Beach Women's Shelter (WSLB). Yoga is an occupation-based intervention known for reducing stress and promoting occupational balance, making it a perfect way for students to practice self-care while supporting a worthy cause. This donation will help WSLB continue their mission to eliminate domestic violence through intervention, education, and empowerment. We are proud to contribute to such an important cause and help create a violence-free community. Thank you to everyone who participated!



PTE Kinesiotaping Workshop

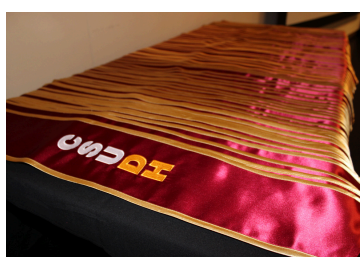


On April 12th, MSOT students from C19 and C20 joined Dr. Penoliar for a day to learn the basics of kinesiotaping. The workshop consisted of a lecture about the applications of kinesiotaping followed by opportunities for hands-on practice where students were able to apply kinesiotape on each other. Our vice president, Pooja, shared "We had an amazing turnout, and much of what we learned was immediately applicable. I personally know a few people who are experiencing lower extremity edema at varying severity, and was able to provide them with techniques to manage it just a few days after the class. A number of people after the event also shared videos and stories about how they were using kinesiotaping already on themselves or people they knew. It felt empowering to be able to offer this service to friends and family after the event!" PTE will be offering another kinesiotape workshop in June, so be on the lookout!



C19 GRAD BANQUET

May 15, 2025



C19 COMMENCEMENT

May 17, 2025



♦ FEATURED ALUMNI ♦



SAM NESTHUS

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOR WELL-BEING

Sam Nesthus is a private practice occupational therapy practitioner who specializes in promoting sensory health, sustainable self-care, and overall well-being for parents. She works with many neurodivergent families, in particular parents of children with sensory processing differences, autism spectrum disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, and/or challenges with regulation. Oftentimes these parents are on their own path of self-discovery regarding their neurodivergence as they begin to better understand their neurodivergent child. Through one-on-one consultation and coaching, monthly parent support groups, and specialized group series, Sam helps parents explore and understand their own sensory preferences and regulatory needs.

She works collaboratively with clients to improve their self-awareness, utilize regulatory tools and strategies, modify their schedules and environments, and simplify family life to bring balance to their daily experiences.

Sam is SIPT-certified and spent her initial seven years of practice working in pediatrics at an outpatient sensory integration clinic. As a mom of two young kids, she knows firsthand about the stress of parenting in today's world. When working with parents, she incorporates topics such as societal expectations and cultural values surrounding motherhood, interoceptive awareness, boundary setting, self-compassion, identification of personal values, and mindfulness. She has a neurodivergent-affirming and trauma-

informed approach and helps parents create a family environment where everyone's unique nervous system is honored. Although reactive regulation strategies are discussed, most of her work emphasizes proactive lifestyle choices that support regulation so that parents can avoid burnout and feel equipped to tackle daily life.



**SAM NESTHUS, OTR/L
MSOT C7**



FEATURED FACULTY



Cindy Carrillo,
MG, OTR/L

Cindy is an occupational therapist working in mental health. A double alumna of CSUDH, she is excited to return to her alma mater to pursue another passion of hers. Her journey began in 2012, when she first learned about occupational therapy after being in a car accident. She started her undergraduate education at CSUDH in 2015, in hopes of one day attending OT school at the same university. She completed her Master of Science of Occupational Therapy at CSUDH in 2022.

As an occupational therapist, she is committed to supporting individuals with mental health conditions to identify and utilize healthy coping skills to support occupational engagement, promote self-regulation, and build routines to improve their quality of life. With her experience in inpatient psychiatric settings, she has developed a deep understanding of the

unique needs of individuals. She utilizes a client-centered approach, using therapeutic activities and interventions to promote emotional and physical well-being.

Cindy has been a guest speaker and mentor for undergraduate students in the Kinesiology Department at CSUDH since 2020. She enjoys being able to advocate for her profession and is driven to inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals. She is looking forward to being able to contribute to the academic environment that once helped shape her own career.

Outside of her professional life, Cindy enjoys creative pursuits such as jewelry making. She also values spending quality time with her loved ones and dogs, Bella and Boba.

Emi Ito,
MA, OTR/L



Emi Ito, MA, OTR/L, CHT, CLT, CEAS received her M.A. in Occupational Therapy from the University of Southern California in 2013. She received her lymphedema certification in 2016 through Norton School of Lymphatic Therapy. She worked for four years in acute care before completing a hand therapy fellowship in Houston. In 2018, she moved back to Los Angeles and passed the Hand Therapy Certification exam. She became certified in ergonomics in 2019, which she incorporates into her

practice. Emi is passionate about empowering her clients to understand their conditions, and learning their individual stories as she walks alongside them on their rehabilitation journey. In her free time, Emi enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with her husband and son.

She is excited to collaborate with and support students as they develop the skills and passion needed to make a meaningful impact in occupational therapy. Go Toros!

CONGRATULATIONS

TIRR Memorial Hermann Occupational Therapy Fellowship Program Acceptance

Neuroscience has always been a passion of mine. Since my undergraduate days, I sought opportunities to learn more about the brain and its role in functioning in recovery. In OT school, I was always eager to learn more about neurological injuries such as stroke, TBI, SCI, and their corresponding interventions. My fieldwork experiences in an outpatient stroke clinic at the VA and a pediatric outpatient clinic further nourished my aspirations to become a Neuro OT. When I received an email from Dr. Kitching with information about a Neurological OT fellowship opportunity, I got an overwhelming sense that pursuing a fellowship was the necessary next step on my OT journey.

Applying for a fellowship requires self-reflection. "Why do I want to be a Neuro OT? How can I contribute to this program? To the OT profession? What makes me qualified?" These were questions that I hadn't considered answering during my time in school. As I pondered about the answers to these application questions, I gradually gained assurance of what kind of OT I wanted to become and the necessary steps I needed to take to attain that goal.



I'm most looking forward to building experience in the various clinical settings offered by this fellowship and the mentorship that accompanies them. I am excited to collaborate within an interdisciplinary settings and explore the boundaries of the scope of our profession. With future goals of obtaining my doctorate and creating community programs for mental health and adaptive sports, I am eager for the professional development that this fellowship will provide.

- Bryan Ha, MSOT C19

OT Department Years of Service Awards



Dr. Terry Peralta-Catipon, Dr. Daniel Swiatek, and Dr. Sheryl Ryan were recognized recently for their number of years at CSUDH. Both Drs. Ryan and Swiatek have been here for 5 years and Dr. Peralta-Catipon has been full-time for 20 years (plus 3 years in an adjunct position). Wishing them all many more years of Torohood!

DEPARTMENT UPDATES



Vanessa Wilder's Engagement!

It's been a sweet season of new beginnings! After meeting last year through a friend who knew of our mutual interest in medical missions, Grant and I are engaged! We're looking forward to starting a new chapter of life together this summer as he begins a family medicine residency in Washington state. (Vanessa Wilder, MSOT C19)



Welcome Back, Ciara Nagao, MSOT, C15!

CSUDH OT Alum, Ciara Nagao, joined our faculty team this semester. She graduated in 2021 with C15, and she works in the hospital as an acute care OT. You may see Ciara on campus guest lecturing in the classroom or helping out at departmental events. Make sure you say hello and welcome her back!



Welcome, Beatrice Henson-O'Neal!

Hi, I'm Beatrice Henson-O'Neal. I'm excited to bring my extensive experience in higher education administration, program management, and strategic communication from Loyola Marymount University and the University of Southern California to my current role at California State University, Dominguez Hills, where I oversee the administrative operations of the Occupational Therapy Department.

Grounded in my Top 5 CliftonStrengths—Connectedness, Empathy, Relator, Developer, and Arranger—I'm passionate about fostering inclusive, collaborative, and well-organized environments. I love mentoring students, building meaningful connections, and supporting cohesive teams where everyone feels seen and valued.

I hold a Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting from Loyola Marymount University and a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Pepperdine University. My work is deeply rooted in the arts and education, blending creativity with purpose and impact.

Outside of work, I unwind by writing, listening to music, watching films and television—especially competitive reality shows and livestreamed trials. They're like real-life drama, but thought-provoking and educational, too. My greatest joy, though, is spending time with my three children, family, and close friends.