

Project Title

Piloting an On-Campus Community-Based Learning Opportunity for Occupational Therapy Students While Expanding PhilaU's Disability Services' Offerings

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Abstract

Purpose: To pilot an on-campus, community and project-based, experiential learning opportunity for occupational therapy (OT) students that integrates coursework and clinical experiences while augmenting the offerings of the Disability Services Office (DSO).

Rationale: Philadelphia University's (PhilaU) OT program is committed to securing new needed community-based placements for its students. PhilaU's DSO needs to expand its services as students with more complex disabilities are enrolling at the university. OT possesses skills to meet this demand. This proposal will implement and assess a pilot project through which OT students will complete community-based clinical placements while augmenting the services of the PhilaU's DSO.

Goal(s): Projects' goals are to: (1) Describe OT students' perception of this experiential learning opportunity on their educational experience; (2) Describe the student with disabilities' impression of the added services; and (3) Assess the degree to which students with disabilities reach their self-identified learning goals.

Project Implementation: As an experiential learning opportunity, OT students will develop the project, complete a community-based clinical placement, and participate in the assessment of the project's outcomes.

Project Deliverables: Key findings will be presented at PhilaU's EduSeries (Spring 2018), the American OT Association conference and the Association of University Centers on Disabilities conference.

Explanation of How the Project Advances Nexus Learning

The project embodies Nexus Learning as an experiential learning opportunity with OT students taking part in all phases of the project designed to solve a real-world problem (Figure 1). The project addresses primarily two of the grant priorities: (1) leveraging the curricular requirement of the Master of Science in OT (MSOT) and Clinical OT Doctoral (OTD) programs to provide an experiential project-based learning opportunity for students in the community; (2) designing an integrative learning opportunity that fosters teamwork and collaboration between the students of two programs and the staff of the DSO.

Literature Review

PhilaU offers an OT graduate program. OT programs' accrediting body requires OT students to complete clinical placements as part of their educational experience (AOTA, 2012). Unfortunately, there is a shortage of traditional clinical placement sites across the country (Thomas et al., 2009). To address this, OT programs are developing new clinical placement sites that meet a community need (Overton, Clark, & Thomas, 2009). Such clinical placements are needed for PhilaU's OT students.

PhilaU enrolls approximately 100 students who receive disability services (Zoe Ann Gingold, personal communication, November 2016). PhilaU's DSO employs one full-time staff to meet the needs of these students. As the number of enrolled students with disabilities and the complexity of their disabilities have increased, the task has become tremendous. In fact, the DSO has identified the need to add to the services it provides (Zoe Ann Gingold, personal communication, November 2016). Occupational therapists have skills that can be used to support students with disability in accessing universities (Glennon, 2016). In turn, DSO can serve as a community-based clinical placement for OT students. A collaboration was formed between the PhilaU's DSO and the OT department to offer a three-tier level of services to be piloted in this project (Figure 2).

As an experiential, project-based learning opportunity, OT students will be instrumental in every step of this project: development, implementation, evaluation and dissemination. In health professions' education, experiential learning is critical for students to develop the professional competencies (Cantor, 1997). Community-based experiential learning has added benefits, linking students with their community in innovative ways (Cantor, 1997). Extensive empirical literature also supports project-based learning in higher education (Helle, Tynjala & Olkinuora, 2006). This project intends to assess the effect on OT students of combining the three learning approaches across courses and clinical placement. Further, students with disabilities benefit from active learning with proper supports to fully engage in their learning community (Orr & Hammig, 2009). This project also intends to augment the successes of these students.

Specific Project Goals and Learning Outcomes

Goal 1. Describe the OT students' self-perception of the impact participating in this project had on their educational experience and career readiness.

Learning outcome: Faculty to learn about the value of integrating experiential project-based learning coursework that evolves into community-based clinical placements.

Goal 2. Describe the student with disabilities impression of the added value of the services provided by the OT students.

Learning outcome: Identifying the students with disability perception of the service's benefits through thematic analysis of qualitative interviews, allowing project's faculty to modify the project for future years and establish the need for institutionalizing the project.

Learning outcome: Identify the primary learning supports of the students with disabilities will enable project's faculty to share with faculty through a Nexus Learning EduSeries.

Goal 3. Assess the degree to which students with disabilities receiving OT services reach their self-identified learning goals.

Learning outcome: Determine through Goal Attainment Scaling (McDougall & King, 2007) the benefit to participating students with disabilities.

Description of Activities and Timeframe

As an experiential learning opportunity, this project involves the integration of multiple courses and clinical placements for its success. A summary of the main activities and timeframe is provided in Table 1. MSOT students will be integral to the development of the project and completion of the clinical placement. The project is also an experiential learning opportunity for an OTD student who will refine the project evaluation plan, lead the data collection and analysis, and participate in dissemination through conference presentations and submission of a peer-reviewed article.

Project Assessment

For Goals 1 and 2, individual semi-structured qualitative interviews will be conducted to obtain the students' perspective. The interviews will be transcribed, coded, interpreted and member checked to maximize the credibility of the data acquired. The outcomes for the student with disabilities who received OT services (Goal 3) will be evaluated through the percentage of student achieved self-identified learning goals or demonstrate a clinically significant increase.

Documentation and Dissemination

The project will be documented through records of OT students' interactions with students with disabilities during their clinical placement and qualitative interviews. The outcomes of the project will be disseminated in multiple ways. Presentations will be submitted to the American OT Association conference and the Association of University Centers on Disabilities conference. An article will be submitted to a peer-reviewed publication. The project's outcomes will be shared with the PhilaU faculty through a PhilaU Today article and an EduSeries workshop focusing on useful strategies identified by participating students with disabilities.

Project Personnel

Marie-Christine Potvin, principal investigator, will mentor students in the development and implementation of this project. She will also serve a consultant to the Disability Services office and provide supplemental preceptorship for the OT students completing their clinical placement. **Monique Chabot**, secondary investigator, will serve as primary preceptor for the community-based clinical placement. She will participate in all aspects of project development, implementation, evaluation and dissemination with the PI and the students. **Zoe Anne Gingold**, secondary investigator, will supervise the OT students completing their clinical placement in the DSO.

Budget Narrative and Worksheet

Funding is sought for qualitative data analysis software (Supply: \$500), assistive technology landing library items (Equipment: \$900), and other cost (i.e., transcription \$1700, professional development fund \$700). The faculty PI and co-PI will receive a stipend. The attached worksheet provides further details.

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