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## Launching the Journal of Occupational Therapy Education

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### Keywords

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# JOTE

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**The Editors' Perspective:  
Launching the *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education***

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Almost two years ago, Dr. Cindy Hayden raised her hand during a department faculty meeting and asked, "Is anyone interested in starting an occupational therapy education journal?" Two of us said yes, and that was the humble, and somewhat hesitant, start of this story. We knew there was currently no education journal for occupational therapy, and that the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) Future of Education Ad Hoc Committee had demonstrated the need for such a journal, in part through a nationwide survey (Gupta & Bilics, 2014). We spent a year further investigating the need for this publication, and examining the resources available to us to start our own education journal for the occupational therapy profession. At the end of the first year, we looked at one another in agreement: the time was right for a journal dedicated to the scholarship of teaching and learning, focused solely on occupational therapy and occupational science education.

Once the decision was made, pieces started to fall into place. Our founding team was rounded out with the excellent addition of three others to the *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education (JOTE)* Editorial Board: Drs. Anita Mitchell, Christine Myers, and Kathleen Matuska. We had generous support from our Eastern Kentucky University librarians, Laura Edwards, Linda Sizemore, and Karen Gilbert, who linked us to the wonderful staff at Bepress, our online publisher. We received an Eastern Kentucky University President's Fellow award that provided funding for our start-up. At the 2016 AOTA annual conference in Chicago, we put out our first call for papers, and received an exceptional response of over 20 submissions this inaugural year. We applaud these early contributors, and also thank the many reviewers who have volunteered to ensure excellence and rigor in this scholarly publication.

We are so pleased to launch the inaugural issue of *JOTE* to coincide with AOTA's centennial. To join the celebration, we solicited an article by authors Christine O. Peters, Peggy M. Martin, and Wanda J. Mahoney that provides a fascinating overview of the first one hundred years in occupational therapy education. The Philadelphia School of Occupational Therapy (PSOT) was one of five founding occupational therapy academic programs. Using PSOT as an example, the authors reflect on the historical events that served as a backdrop for burgeoning occupational therapy academic programs. PSOT quickly gained a reputation for leadership and excellence. Many of PSOT's graduates became leaders in occupational therapy, such as Florence Statell and Gail Fidler. These graduates are some of our profession's principal scholars, educators, and leaders, whose influence on the profession has been longstanding. Willard and Spackman led the PSOT program for decades: two names that are well known today by most every occupational therapy educator and student in the United States. And yet, despite high standards, accolades, curricular expansion, and the introduction of educational standards and accreditation, PSOT and the entire School of Allied Medical Professions at the University of Pennsylvania was closed after 60 years. The reasons for the closure may feel familiar to those of us in academia today, including a lack of doctoral-prepared faculty, limited external funding, and the challenges of moving to graduate level education. These concerns continue to be relevant to many occupational therapy academic programs today.

Some historical lessons may be learned from the closing of PSOT in relation to a relatively new form of research: the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL). Boyer (1990) was the first to describe four areas of research: the scholarship of discovery research, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of service, and the scholarship of teaching. Boyer's groundbreaking work gave credence to all researchers interested in examining teaching through empirical research. Since then, his definition of the scholarship of teaching has been expanded to include learning as well. And like all good concepts, SOTL continues to be tested, debated, and critiqued by scholars and theorists on an ongoing basis (Kreber & Cranton, 2000; McKinney, 2004; Shulman, 2000). It has taken time for SOTL to gain respect among researchers, academicians, and administrators (Boshier, 2009; Schroeder, 2007). However, many foundations, professional organizations, and institutions of higher learning are supportive of SOTL, one example being its inclusion in promotion and tenure guidelines at some universities (Gupta & Bilics, 2014; Pace, 2004). Indeed, AOTA recognizes SOTL as a valid form of research within the profession (AOTA, 2016) and has included research goals related to educational theory building, pedagogy, instructional methods, learner characteristics and competencies, socialization to the profession, and faculty development and resources in the Occupational Therapy Education Research Agenda (2014). SOTL provides a respected, valued means for many occupational therapy faculty to engage in scholarship that results in more effective teaching, and ultimately occupational therapy practitioners who are better prepared to work in an ever changing, complex health care system.

While it is important for SOTL to be conducted and consumed at a broad level (Kreber, 2007), others argue that SOTL should occur at the disciplinary level (Healy, 2000).

Who knows better than educators within the profession itself the best ways to teach and the most effective ways to help students learn the intricacies and essential aspects of the profession? Gupta and Bilics (2014) advocated for a core group (“third branch”; p. S91) of occupational therapy education researchers dedicated to investigating the central characteristics of occupational therapy education. The occupational therapy profession needs focused research to understand the most effective means of teaching students to understand the highly complex topic of occupation, and how to apply occupation-based practice in a variety of health care settings and to people with diverse diagnoses. We need studies examining the best means of ensuring our graduates are evidence-based practitioners. Faculty in our academic programs need to develop occupational therapy educational theory that forms the basis for our teaching and learning practices. We need to understand who our students are and how they learn. Our profession needs research to show how students learn at each level of occupational therapy education, from associate’s to master’s and doctoral degrees. We need to study the most effective ways to incorporate interprofessional education and practice into our curricula. These are but a few of the challenges ahead of us in occupational science and occupational therapy education research.

The mission of *JOTE* is to disseminate open access, high quality, peer-reviewed research about teaching and learning as it relates to occupational therapy and occupational science. *JOTE* seeks to discover and promote best practices for the education of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants, at pre- and post- licensure levels. *JOTE* advances education for occupational therapy and occupational science by featuring articles that improve the empirical understanding of teaching and learning theories and methods. *JOTE* publishes original scholarly articles that are of significance to occupational therapy educators and encourages submissions related to all levels of education (occupational therapy assistant, undergraduate, graduate entry-level, post-graduate, and continuing education). *JOTE* encourages submissions of the highest quality from a wide range of areas of education research. Additionally, *JOTE* serves as a repository of valuable reviews of innovative educational technology, media, books, and teaching materials. The journal is of interest to academicians, researchers, and those interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning as it relates to occupational therapy and occupational science. The *JOTE* publication will be open access online only, and there are no fees for authors or readers. This fully open access format makes the journal accessible to a larger audience, benefitting researchers, instructors, students, and their future clients.

The manuscripts included in this inaugural issue of *JOTE* reflect diversity in original research. The first manuscript to be submitted, and accepted, was “Exploring the Impact of Service Learning in Haiti on the Cultural Competence of OTD Students,” by authors Nathan Short and Heather St. Peters. This study used a one-group pretest-posttest design to examine the cultural competence of students on a service learning trip to Haiti. In Ron Carson’s study, “Relationships Between Student Grit and Team-Based Learning Preferences in a Master’s Level Occupational Therapy Program”, he reports the relationship between student grit, defined as the specific characteristic of perseverance and passion for long-term goals, and perceptions of team-based learning

(TBL) in a cohort of first-semester, master's level occupational therapy students. Brad Egan and Susan Cahill present the results of their study: "National Survey to Identify Mental Health Topics in Entry-level OT and OTA Curricula: Implications for Occupational Therapy Education." Kitsum Li, Julia Wilbarger, and Shad St. Louis describe a behavioral interview admissions process that was evaluated with a feasibility study using a mixed methods, single group exploratory design. A team from Thomas Jefferson University (authors Amy Carroll, E. Adel Herge, Lindsay Johnson, and Roseann C. Schaaf) measure the impact of using a data-driven decision making approach to train students and fieldwork educators to use evidence in practice. And finally, in educational innovations, Wendy Goldbach and Tiffany Stella describe an experiential learning course designed to advance student readiness for level II fieldwork.

We hope you enjoy the first issue of JOTE, and are inspired to submit your own educational research, to serve as a reviewer, or to improve and expand your own work as an occupational therapy educator!

#### The Editors

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