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## Exploring How Integrative Seminars Contribute to Students' Readiness for Level II Fieldwork

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# Exploring How Integrative Seminars Contribute to Students' Readiness for Level II Fieldwork

## Abstract

The integrative seminar is an evidence-based teaching-learning approach that has recently been used to help prepare occupational therapy students for Level II fieldwork. Integrative seminars provide a dedicated context for students to synthesize their learning across various subjects in a professional curriculum. The seminars also focus on practical application of didactic learning. To explore the students' self-perceived effectiveness of this innovation in occupational therapy education, post-fieldwork survey feedback was collected from a recent cohort of students who participated in a four-course integrative seminar series. Most students indicated that the integrative seminars contributed to their critical thinking, communication/reporting skills, interpersonal skills, and professional identity. All students reported that the integrative seminar series contributed to their readiness for Level II fieldwork. A qualitative analysis of *how* students applied skills and insights gained from the integrative seminars during fieldwork yielded three themes: mental readiness, cornerstones of occupational therapy practice, and specific aspects of the occupational therapy process. The findings from this study support integrative seminars' potential value in preparing students for meeting the common challenges encountered on Level II fieldwork.

## Keywords

Integrative seminar, fieldwork, occupational therapy education

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## Exploring How Integrative Seminars Contribute to Students' Readiness for Level II Fieldwork

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### ABSTRACT

The integrative seminar is an evidence-based teaching-learning approach that has recently been used to help prepare occupational therapy students for Level II fieldwork. Integrative seminars provide a dedicated context for students to synthesize their learning across various subjects in a professional curriculum. The seminars also focus on practical application of didactic learning. To explore the students' self-perceived effectiveness of this innovation in occupational therapy education, post-fieldwork survey feedback was collected from a recent cohort of students who participated in a four-course integrative seminar series. Most students indicated that the integrative seminars contributed to their critical thinking, communication/reporting skills, interpersonal skills, and professional identity. All students reported that the integrative seminar series contributed to their readiness for Level II fieldwork. A qualitative analysis of *how* students applied skills and insights gained from the integrative seminars during fieldwork yielded three themes: mental readiness, cornerstones of occupational therapy practice, and specific aspects of the occupational therapy process. The findings from this study support integrative seminars' potential value in preparing students for meeting the common challenges encountered on Level II fieldwork.

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Level II fieldwork is a pivotal juncture in occupational therapy education. Students must transition to the role of a practitioner, solidify their professional identity, and achieve clinical competence (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education [ACOTE], 2018; Ashby et al., 2016). This essential component of occupational therapy education "focuses on the application of evidence-based, purposeful, and meaningful occupations as well as administration and management of occupational therapy service provision" by the student under the supervision of a qualified occupational therapist

(American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2018a, p.1). Preparing students for the complexities of clinical practice comes with many challenges. In particular, Level II fieldwork students commonly have difficulties with thinking critically “in the moment,” applying specific technical skills, and adjusting to a dynamic practice setting (Knecht-Sabres et al., 2013, p.1). Anxiety about failure and a lack of confidence may further hinder students’ performance and learning during fieldwork (Andonian, 2017; Naidoo & van Wyk, 2016). Occasionally, students do not pass Level II fieldwork (Harvison, 2020). Common reasons for failing Level II fieldwork include poor problem solving, difficulties with clinical reasoning, and lack of reflection skills. Additional risk factors include poor communication skills and difficulty responding to constructive feedback (James & Musselman, 2006; Nicola-Richmond et al., 2017). To support students’ preparedness for Level II fieldwork, an integrative seminar series was added to the occupational therapy curriculum at our university.

### Literature Review

The *integrative seminar* has been documented as a signature pedagogy in various health professions including social work, nursing, medicine, and optometry (Denial & Zorn, 2006; Fortune et al., 2018; Hickey et al., 2018; Roberti et al., 2017); its application to occupational therapy is a recent innovation (Wu & Shea, 2020). Intended to “address the challenge of content overload,” integrative seminars do not introduce new content but rather provide a dedicated context for students to synthesize, deepen, and apply their learning (Hickey et al., 2018, p. 283). Students are guided to connect didactic learning with clinical applications (Fortune et al., 2018; Roberti et al., 2017; Spira & Teigiser, 2010) and to synthesize learning across various academic subjects in a professional curriculum (Hickey et al., 2018; Roberti et al., 2017). Moreover, the seminars direct students to integrate new learning with their individual life contexts, making learning personally meaningful and relevant (Stout & Holmes, 2013).

Synthesis of a profession’s unique knowledge, skills, and values is necessary for developing a cohesive sense of professional identity (Spira & Teigiser, 2010). Integrative seminars, through practical applications and guided reflections, are designed to assist students in gaining a deeper understanding of the unique aspects of their chosen profession and their personal fit for the profession (Fortune et al., 2018). The need for occupational therapy students to be well-versed in the “distinct nature of occupation” is highlighted in the profession’s educational standards (ACOTE, 2018, p. 26). Historically, professional identity has been a challenge for the occupational therapy profession. In a Slagle lecture, Mary Reilly stated, “the wide and gaping chasm which exists between the complexity of illness and the commonplaceness of our treatment tools is, and always will be, both the pride and anguish of our profession” (Reilly, 1962, p. 1). Professional identity continues to be a concern in current times. In their literature review, Turner and Knight (2015) found that occupational therapy practitioners have difficulty describing what they do and providing a rationale for occupation focused practice. Thus, it is imperative that occupational therapy education intentionally prepares students to have a solid professional identity (Turner, 2011).

Key features of integrative seminars include small-group student collaboration, focus on practical experiences, and active reflection about the meaning and context of the practical experiences (Fortune et al., 2018; Roberti et al., 2017). In addition, the seminars are designed to “follow student developmental stages” (Fortune et al., 2018, p.95). This requires seminar instructors to collaborate closely with other faculty members in order to determine the optimal timing of learning activities so that the seminar content is meaningful, relevant, and appropriate for what the students are experiencing in the entire curriculum.

When applied to the occupational therapy curriculum at our university, the integrative seminars gradually expanded into a four-course series that threads through the first two years of the curriculum. Table 1 depicts the timing, content focus, and types of client cases included in each course. The seminar sequence is progressive. The content for each integrative seminar course was created in response to specific learning needs identified by students, faculty, and fieldwork educators. To maintain the characteristic small group format (no more than 14 students; Roberti et al., 2017), each integrative seminar course was offered with three sections taught by three different instructors. The class typically met three hours per week over a 15-week semester.

**Table 1**

*Course Content of the Integrative Seminar Series*

<b>Course</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Focus of Learning</b>	<b>Types of client cases</b>
OT 701	First year, first semester	Explore effective learning strategies and self-reflection skills  Develop foundational occupational therapy skills, such as observation and communication  Articulate occupational therapy to stakeholders	Children and adults living in the community who previously received occupational therapy services
OT 702	First year, first semester	Complete a client interview and occupational profile  Develop intervention plans  Explore the roles of interdisciplinary team members	Three young adult clients who are in acute care and have both physical and psychosocial manifestations; for example, a client who sustained a recent spinal cord injury resulting in paraplegia is also experiencing depression

OT 703	Second year, first semester	Observe and document occupational challenges  Identify interventions to address occupational challenges	Client cases across the lifespan from infant to older adult. Presentation of cases is grouped by the primary presenting challenge, either motor, cognitive, or psychosocial.
OT 704	Second year, second semester	Applying critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills throughout the occupational therapy process	Complex client cases across the lifespan from infant to older adult. The cases provide exposure to non-traditional settings (such as community-based occupational therapy for at-risk youth), specialized settings (a simulated intensive care unit), and client populations who have complex needs (such as a post-combat veteran who has polytrauma and post-traumatic stress disorder).

The occupational therapy integrative seminars were designed as pass/fail lab courses. A pass/fail evaluation system is a potential strategy to minimize student stress about grades without negatively impacting academic learning (Spring et al., 2011). Only formative assessments are used, as the emphasis is on the process rather than the product of learning (Schneller & Brocato, 2011). Course grades are determined primarily by class participation and secondarily by written assignments, which include reflective journaling, self-assessments, and peer assessments.

To promote active participation and critical thinking, the seminars were infused with problem-based learning, team-based learning, and high fidelity simulations (Lexen et al., 2018; Shea, 2015). Simulation is an educational technique that allows interactive, immersive learning by creating a replication of potential real-life clinical experiences (Maran & Glavin, 2003). The level of fidelity refers to the degree to which the simulation mimics reality. Thus, a high fidelity simulation would consist of realistic equipment and environmental setup with the optional use of trained actors, standardized patients (SPs), so that learners would perceive the situation to be realistic and respond as they would in the real situation (Shea, 2015).

Off-campus learning activities were incorporated to broaden students' perspectives for practical application (Nakagawa et al., 2012). Moreover, the seminars were designed with regular opportunities for students to receive and respond to feedback. Verbal and

written feedback regarding clinical reasoning and performance is provided to each student by peers, SPs (post-simulation), and instructors throughout the seminars. Constructive feedback offered with suggestions for improvement has been shown to enhance occupational therapy students' clinical performance (de Beer & Martensson, 2015).

The documented benefits of integrative seminars are highly relevant to student needs for Level II fieldwork (AOTA, 2018b). Specifically, integrative seminars have been shown to support the development of self-directed, critical, creative, and reflective learners (Roberti et al., 2017). These seminars enhance interpersonal and leadership skills (Roberti et al., 2017; Spira & Teigiser, 2010) as well as a cohesive sense of professional identity (Fortune et al., 2018; Spira & Teigiser, 2010). Recent findings suggest that integrative seminars encourage students' self-discovery as emerging clinicians (Wu & Shea, 2020). In addition, students have found the integrative seminar to be enjoyable and perceive it as a safe learning environment (Hickey et al., 2018).

### **Purpose of the Present Study**

Since the integrative seminar is a relatively new teaching-learning tool for occupational therapy education, systematic evaluation of its effectiveness beyond routine course evaluations is important for ensuring that the curriculum is meeting its intended educational goals (ACOTE, 2018). A key goal for launching integrative seminars in our occupational therapy program was to increase student preparedness for Level II fieldwork. Thus, we are collecting student feedback post-fieldwork to explore and validate the effectiveness of this pedagogy. Student feedback has been identified to be a valuable tool to inform educators about the effectiveness of their teaching practice and to stimulate new information and insights about the student learning experience (Mandouit, 2018). In this study, we aimed to investigate:

1. Are students' post-fieldwork perceptions aligned with what has been documented in existing literature regarding the benefits of integrative seminars?
2. Has the integrative seminar series contributed to this current student cohort's perceived preparedness for Level II fieldwork?
3. In what ways, if any, did students specifically apply skills or insights gained from the integrative seminars during fieldwork?
4. This inquiry is an initial exploration into *how* integrative seminars may support students' actual clinical performance during Level II fieldwork.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The participants were a convenience sample of students enrolled in an occupational therapy program in the Western United States. This student cohort participated in the integrative seminar series from September 2017 to April 2019 and completed Level II fieldwork from May 2019 to January 2020. Students whose fieldwork was still in progress were excluded. The sample included a total of 34 students: 28 doctoral students and six master's level students. Thirty-three were female and one was male.

## Procedures

An anonymous online survey was developed to collect student feedback. Online surveys have been established as a flexible, useful tool for addressing a diverse range of topics in educational research (Roberts & Allen, 2015). Students often prefer online surveys (Roberts & Allen, 2015), likely due to its convenience and anonymity (Evans & Mathur, 2018). The survey content was informed by the documented benefits of integrative seminars that were most relevant to Level II fieldwork, which included: practical application of knowledge and skills (Hickey et al., 2018; Roberti et al., 2017); critical thinking (Roberti et al., 2017); communication skills (Roberti et al., 2017); interpersonal skills (Roberti et al., 2017; Spira & Teigiser, 2010); and professional identity (Fortune et al., 2018; Spira & Teigiser, 2010). Following the survey development process delineated by Portney and Watkins (2015), guiding questions were created. The survey included seven Likert scale questions (provided in Table 2), one yes/no question (provided in Table 3), and two open-ended, text entry questions (provided in Table 4). Surveys that include both Likert scale and open-ended questions are effective in allowing educators to easily gauge whole group responses while also providing students “with the opportunity to elaborate and create an accurate snapshot of their feedback experience” (Mandouit, 2018, p. 760). A draft of the survey was reviewed by two peer occupational therapy faculty members and piloted with two occupational therapy students from a different cohort. Edits were made in response to faculty and student feedback.

The final version of this post-fieldwork survey was administered anonymously using a university subscribed online survey software Qualtrics. The master’s level students were emailed a survey link on January 21, 2020. The doctoral students were provided the survey link during an in-person class meeting on January 27, 2020. To ensure trustworthiness of the data collected, students were assured their participation was voluntary and that their responses were anonymous. Students were informed about the purpose of the survey as ongoing curriculum improvement and encouraged to answer candidly.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. Text responses were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is commonly used in the health professions and is suitable for a variety of text data (Lindgren et al., 2020). Since this current study is an initial exploration of a topic that has not been previously reported in the literature, conventional content analysis was chosen as an appropriate method for identifying trends and patterns in the students’ responses (Graneheim et al., 2017; Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Qualitative content analysis offers opportunities to analyze manifest content, resulting in *categories*, as well as latent content, leading to *themes* (Lindgren et al., 2020).

The two authors independently coded the text responses. Both authors were occupational therapy faculty members who taught integrative seminar courses. The first author was also a member of the Level II fieldwork team who supported and collaborated with the academic fieldwork coordinator. Both authors had training and experience with coding and thematic analysis. During coding, the authors used an



inductive, data driven approach of searching for patterns in the data (Graneheim et al., 2017). The text responses were organized into meaning units that were further abstracted into codes. The codes were then sorted into emerging categories and/or themes. After independent coding was completed, the authors met to discuss discrepancies with coding and establish agreement on the emergent categories and themes.

The authors applied the guidelines established by Lindgren and colleagues (2020) for strengthening the trustworthiness of qualitative content analyses. These guidelines included: (a) retain the entire text until coding is complete and report any excluded data, (b) stay close to the words in the original text when coding, (c) keep the codes on the same level of abstraction and interpretation, and (d) ensure that the names of categories and themes address the purpose of the study and include the underlying message uniting all sub-categories and sub-themes (Lindgren et al., 2020). This study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

## Results

### Response Rate

The response rate was 76% with 26 completed surveys received. Responses were submitted from January 22 to January 28, 2020. Survey duration as reported by Qualtrics ranged from 28 seconds to 7 minutes 25 seconds; most respondents appeared to have spent 3 to 5 minutes completing the survey.

### Quantitative Findings

Table 2 summarizes the results from the survey's Likert scale items.

**Table 2**

*Responses to the Likert Scale Survey Items*

Survey Item	Frequency of Responses			
	A great deal	A moderate amount	A little	Not at all
<i>To what extent did the integrative seminar series . . .</i>				
Help you apply what you learned in lectures and labs to OT practice?	16 (62%)*	9 (35%)	1 (4%)	0
Develop your professional reporting and documentation skills?	10 (38%)	10 (38%)	5 (19%)	1 (4%)
Develop your critical thinking skills?	15 (58%)	11 (42%)	0	0
Develop your interpersonal skills with colleagues?	11 (42%)	13 (50%)	2 (8%)	0
Develop your therapeutic relationship skills with clients?	11 (42%)	14 (54%)	1 (4%)	0

Develop your unique professional identity as an occupational therapist?	7 (27%)	17 (65%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)
Contribute to your readiness for Level II fieldwork?	8 (31%)	13 (50%)	5 (19%)	0

Note. \*The percentage values were rounded to whole numbers for readability.

All respondents (100%) felt that the integrative seminar series helped them to some degree with applying knowledge and skills to occupational therapy practice, developing their critical thinking skills, developing their interpersonal skills with colleagues, and developing their therapeutic relationship skills with clients. In addition, all respondents indicated that the integrative seminars contributed to some degree to their readiness for Level II fieldwork.

Nearly all respondents (96%) felt that the integrative seminar series helped them to some degree with developing their professional reporting and documentation skills as well as with developing their unique professional identity as an occupational therapist.

Table 3 provides the results from the yes/no question. Sixteen students indicated that there were instances during Level II fieldwork in which they specifically applied skills or insights gained from the integrative seminar courses. Those who answered “yes” to the survey item in Table 3 were prompted to provide a specific example.

**Table 3**

*Responses to the Yes/No Survey Item*

Survey Item	Frequency of Responses	
	Yes	No
Reflecting back on your <b>Level II</b> fieldwork, were there any instances in which you specifically applied skills or insights gained from the integrative seminar courses?	16 (64%)	9 (36%)

### **Students' Application of Skills and Insights During Fieldwork**

Respondents who answered “yes” to the survey question about applying skills or insights gained from the integrative seminar courses during Level II fieldwork were asked to provide a specific example. All 16 students who had responded “yes” provided a text entry response as requested. The responses ranged from one to three sentences and addressed one to three topics. The qualitative content analysis yielded three themes about students' application of skills or insights gained from the integrative seminars during Level II fieldwork: mental readiness, cornerstones of the occupational therapy process, and specific aspects of the occupational therapy process.

### ***Mental Readiness***

Five students indicated that the seminars, in particular the simulations, enhanced their mental readiness for the clinical setting by augmenting attributes such as confidence, calmness, and critical thinking. One student noted, “our simulation experiences have definitely helped in my performance during fieldwork—particularly adjusting to unknown and unexpected situations.” Another student stated, “having practiced in the simulation lab gave me a lot of confidence in patient interactions.” A different student wrote, “the simulations helped me feel calmer in unexpected situations during fieldwork.” A different aspect of mental readiness, critical thinking, was addressed by a student who stated, “the critical thinking that happened during seminar was great practice for me.”

### ***Cornerstones of the Occupational Therapy Process***

Five students’ comments pertained to cornerstones of the occupational therapy process as described in the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (AOTA, 2020). Within this theme, two categories emerged: therapeutic use of self and activity analysis.

**Therapeutic Use of Self.** Four students reported that the seminars contributed to their development of various elements of therapeutic use of self, including active listening and cultural sensitivity. A student cited an example as, “with difficult patients—listening to them, allowing space, and using my therapeutic use of self to help them progress in treatment.” Another student reported, “I made sure to be culturally sensitive as I spoke to a diverse group of clients, which was covered in our first integrative seminar.” A different student noted, “Our sim experiences have definitely helped in my experience during fieldwork II—particularly therapeutic use of self.”

**Activity Analysis.** One student identified “activity analysis” as an example of how they applied skills gained from integrative seminars during fieldwork.

### ***Specific Aspects of the Occupational Therapy Process***

Eight students’ responses addressed specific, discrete aspects of the occupational therapy process. Within this theme, three categories emerged: evaluation, interventions, and documentation.

**Evaluation.** Four students felt that the opportunities to practice gathering an occupational profile during integrative seminars were beneficial. A student stated, “being able to practice interviewing people we have not met and formulating the appropriate questions based on information we received prior to meeting them was very helpful.” In addition, another student spoke about naturalistic observations. The student wrote, “Observations during the first integrative seminar was probably the most eye opening for me. I learned to examine individuals performing occupations in their natural environment.”

**Intervention.** This category included specific intervention skills. Three students referred to their experience of practicing functional mobility interventions with a SP while managing medical lines in a simulated acute care setting. A student explained, “I spent my first Level II fieldwork in acute care. The information and skills we learned during

integrative seminar helped me in this setting. For example, using beds, reading monitors, and transferring patients.” Another student reported, “The simulation focused on transfers with lines attached contributed to my learning significantly. During my placement in a skilled nursing facility (SNF) setting, I remembered what errors I had during the simulation and was able to correct them when I transferred my first patient while at the SNF.” A third student noted, “in my fieldwork I had to navigate lines to perform a bed to wheelchair transfer.” Another student discussed applying findings from a standardized assessment to inform intervention implementation. The student wrote, “I specifically used skills obtained during the psychosocial simulation in which they demonstrated the Allen Cognitive activities in my first Level II location.” Discharge planning skills also emerged under this category, as reflected by a student’s comment, “In my fieldwork I had to find community resources for my clients.”

**Documentation.** Three students identified the value of the clinical documentation coursework provided in the integrative seminars. One student noted, “there were times during fieldwork when I reflected on our group discussions about body movement and how to properly document, which was really helpful.” Another student reported “the detailed documentation practice was very useful.”

### **Excluded Data**

One of the text entry responses was not included in the themes presented above due to not being specific enough to fit the emerging themes. This response was “I gained valuable skills and insights from the integrative seminar courses, especially from the simulations.”

### **Other Recommendations and Comments**

The second text entry question asked all respondents to provide other recommendations or comments for the integrative seminars. Eight responses, ranging from one to three sentences in length and addressing one to two topics, were collected. In terms of recommendations, a student suggested adding opportunities to practice standardized assessment techniques such as manual muscle testing. Two students recommended incorporating more simulations into the seminars. Another student suggested creating a module on interacting with fieldwork educators during the last semester prior to fieldwork, as “many of us had difficult relationships with our fieldwork educators.” In addition, a student who had completed a mental health fieldwork placement gave a constructive comment regarding the realism of clinical presentation in one of the simulations. The student indicated, “The character was too over the top and not realistic...I worked with many people with mania during my fieldwork and none of them resembled the simulation.”

The remaining comments spoke positively about the integrative seminars as classes that were important, valuable, well-structured, as well as enjoyable. Two such comments directly referenced fieldwork. One student reported, “the integrative seminars had a positive impact on the skills and insights applied to fieldwork II on a global scale.” Another student stated, “I appreciated all the content covered throughout each course as it directly prepared us for our fieldwork experiences.”

## Discussion

The survey response rate of 76% sufficiently minimizes nonresponse bias (Reierson Draugalis & Plaza, 2009), and it is likely that the findings are representative of the sample.

### Alignment with Documented Benefits of Integrative Seminars

Consistent with existing literature about integrative seminars from various health professions (Fortune et al., 2018; Hickey et al., 2018; Roberti et al., 2017; Spira & Teigiser, 2010; Wu & Shea, 2020), the occupational therapy integrative seminars in this study appear to have contributed to the students' critical thinking, communication skills, interpersonal skills, and professional identity. Development in these aforementioned areas are likely to support students during Level II fieldwork, as they grapple with the role transition from student to practitioner (Andonian, 2017) and become socialized to the occupational therapy profession (Ashby et al., 2016).

### Meeting the Challenges of Fieldwork

Current findings suggest that the integrative seminar series contributed to some degree to the students' perceived readiness for Level II fieldwork. A student's *global* level of confidence and self-efficacy as well as their *specific* technical competence have both been found to be important for a successful fieldwork experience and transition to practice (Patterson & D'Amico, 2020). On a *global* level, students in the current study found the seminars and simulations to be beneficial for developing their overall confidence and comfort level in a clinical setting. Integrative seminars (Hickey et al., 2018) and high fidelity simulations (Blum et al., 2010; Gibbs et al., 2017; Ohtake et al., 2013) have been shown to bolster health professions students' confidence levels for clinical practice. Students in this current study also indicated that the seminars supported the development of *specific* technical skills, such as gathering an occupational profile, transfers, and documentation. Although the pedagogy of integrative seminar focuses on practical skill-building (Stout & Holmes, 2013) and competency development (Spira & Teigiser, 2010), there is a paucity of studies exploring the effects of integrative seminars on specific technical competence. Conclusive findings about the effects of integrative seminars on students' clinical skills have yet to be reported (Fortune et al., 2018).

The emergent themes from the qualitative analysis regarding the perceived impact of integrative seminars show some alignment with the student challenges identified by Knecht-Sabres et al. (2013). It is promising that the integrative seminars may be instrumental in addressing some of the most common challenges associated with transitioning to practice: "in the moment" critical thinking; applying specific technical skills; and effectively adjusting to a complex, dynamic practice setting (Knecht-Sabres et al., 2013, p. 1).

### Professional Identity

The topic of professional identity may be worthy of further consideration, as it has been identified as an area of need for the occupational therapy profession (Turner & Knight, 2015). Although most respondents in the current study indicated that the integrative

seminars contributed to their professional identity development, it was notable that professional identity was not reflected in the text entry responses while all other Likert scale items were. It may be worthy to explore the need to further strengthen the professional identity component in our integrative seminar curriculum. The greatest influences on students' development of a professional identity come from professional coursework and clinical education (Ashby et al., 2016). During didactic coursework, it is important to lay a strong foundation for professional socialization and professional identity, as this will help students acclimate to clinical practice in today's dynamic health care climate during fieldwork (Clare et al., 2015). The integrative seminars may be particularly well-suited as a tool for supporting students' emerging professional identity due to the pedagogical emphasis on active reflection and contextualization of learning for each student (Stout & Holmes, 2013).

### **High-Fidelity Simulations**

The high-fidelity simulations infused throughout the integrative seminar series appeared to have been particularly impactful for the students. Although the occupational therapy literature has yet to document conclusive quantitative evidence linking simulation-based learning to fieldwork performance (Bennett et al., 2017; Lucas Molitor & Nissen, 2020; Ozelie et al., 2016), our current findings are consistent with what has been documented about occupational therapy students' favorable responses to simulation-based learning (Bennett et al., 2017; Gibbs et al., 2017; Shea, 2015).

A student comment highlights an area of challenge associated with the use of SP simulation encounters. Although students (Cho et al., 2019; Walker & Weidner, 2010) and clinicians (Erby et al., 2011) generally perceive SPs to be realistic, there is nonetheless some degree of variability among individual actors in the accuracy of their performance (Erby et al., 2011). Anecdotally, the integrative seminar instructors have noted that the realism and accuracy of the SP's performance seem to affect the student learning experiences. Therefore, the instructors are vigilant in selecting experienced SPs who have demonstrated depth and breadth in their performances to participate in our simulations. Additionally, the SP training process has also been expanded to be multi-modal, including verbal discussions, viewing and discussing video footage of previous simulations of the same case, and rehearsals where the SP role plays with a faculty member and then receives feedback. These practices will continue to be used as an effort to provide students with realistic clinical exposure in preparation for fieldwork.

### **Student-Fieldwork Educator Interactions**

A student's suggestion to add seminar content addressing how to interact with fieldwork educators warrants attention, as interpersonal challenges between students and fieldwork educators have been identified to be a common reason for failing fieldwork (Nicola-Richmond et al., 2017). Communication with fieldwork educators is specifically addressed in fieldwork coursework via lecture and small group case discussions; however, this complex topic may not have been sufficiently addressed. The student's request for additional support with this topic deserves further investigation. Integrative seminars, perceived by the students as a safe learning space, may be the ideal context for students to explore and practice having difficult conversations with a supervisor in a

high-stakes situation such as Level II fieldwork. SP encounters may be an effective learning modality for meeting this learning objective pertaining to interpersonal communication skills (International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning Standards Committee, 2016). Since simulations have been an integral learning tool for preparing students to manage clinical situations during fieldwork, it may be appropriate to extend the use of simulation-based learning to help prepare students for supervisory challenges often encountered during fieldwork.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The current findings should be interpreted with caution as they only reflect responses from one cohort of students at one university. Future studies could include data from additional cohorts and from other universities that offer integrative seminar coursework. The current data were collected using only one method, anonymous surveys. In addition, the data only included student report of their experiences and perceptions.

Although survey questionnaires have been identified as the most practical, effective way to gather student feedback, using multiple methods provides more complete answers (Mandout, 2018). Incorporating other qualitative data collection methods such as focus groups and individual interviews in future studies could augment the findings by providing more contextualized, in-depth accounts of the students' lived experiences pertaining to the integrative seminars and fieldwork. Additionally, future studies incorporating objective measures of fieldwork outcomes, such as student fieldwork performance evaluations or fieldwork pass rates, should be considered.

The student suggestion about developing a learning module addressing how to interact with fieldwork educators highlights a learning need that has significant practical implications. It would be worthy to investigate what teaching-learning methods occupational therapy programs are currently using to address this need and to review the effectiveness of the respective methods identified.

### **Implications for Occupational Therapy Education**

The current findings suggest that integrative seminar coursework adds value to an occupational therapy curriculum. The following suggestions are offered to educators as considerations for curriculum design:

- Integrative seminars are a unique pedagogy designed to meet an important learning need. By focusing on practical applications rather than new content, integrative seminars create a safe, supportive space for students to synthesize and contextualize their learning.
- While this paper describes a multi-course series, faculty could start on a small scale with developing integrative seminar content. For example, consider piloting one learning module within an existing course where the focus is solely on integration and application of learning without introducing new content.
- When developing course topics, it would be beneficial to solicit feedback from fieldwork students and fieldwork educators to identify areas of need relevant to each program's specific curriculum and student preparedness for fieldwork.

- To ensure quality and effectiveness, it is important to collect feedback from students on a regular and ongoing basis when implementing integrative seminars. Given the small group format and interactive nature of integrative seminars, students may be particularly forthcoming and comfortable with providing feedback. The authors have gained valuable insights from the student feedback process.

### Conclusion

The integrative seminar is an innovative, evidence-based teaching-learning method that appears well-suited for meeting the needs of occupational therapy students. The findings from this study support integrative seminars' potential value in preparing students for meeting the common challenges encountered on Level II fieldwork.

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