

## What Constitutes Occupational Therapy Leaders: An Investigation into Promising OTD Graduates

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### Project Summary

The purpose of this project is to examine the characteristics and professional career outcomes of the identified *promising* occupational therapy doctoral graduates (OTD) during the past three years. Three years ago, the School of Pharmacy and Health Professions initiated a longitudinal project to identify and track a group of promising graduates from each program (occupational therapy, physical therapy and pharmacy) to examine the characteristics and career development of these identified future professional leaders. In occupational therapy particular, each year, a group of *promising* graduates, 6-8 are nominated by the OT assessment committee. A focus group, facilitated by an experienced faculty or a staff member outside occupational therapy is conducted and videotaped with these identified *promising* OT graduates. A luncheon is also held for the promising graduates with OT assessment committee members prior to the focus group. Group interviews/ conversations centered on the characteristics of these graduates as well as their future career goal are occurred at the luncheon. Notes are taken by the committee chair at the luncheon.

The proposed project is to analyze the collected data during past three years to examine the attributes and characteristics of these graduates. In addition, a survey will be conducted with all the identified *promising* OT graduates to follow up on their career outcomes after graduation. Results of this project will help us answer a fundamental question: What constitutes an occupational therapy professional leader? Answers to this question will provide insights and guidance for possible curriculum revision in order to better educate and develop future professional leaders. Findings of the study will also provide empirical information regarding attributes of health care professional leaders.

The purpose of this project is to examine the attributes and professional career outcomes of the identified *promising* occupational therapy doctoral graduates in the *Department of OT at School of Pharmacy and Health Professions*. Three years ago, *School of Pharmacy and Health Professions* initiated a longitudinal project to track groups of identified *promising* graduates from occupational therapy, physical therapy and pharmacy programs. Specifically in OT, each December, a group of *promising* graduates, 6-8 are nominated by the OT assessment committee. Before their graduation in December, focus group discussions are conducted with these *promising* graduates. The focus group discussion is facilitated by an experienced faculty member or a staff member outside occupational therapy and the discussion is videotaped with the permission of the graduates. Additionally, a luncheon is also held for the *promising* graduates and OT assessment committee members before the focus group discussions. Informal conversations centered on the characteristics of these graduates as well as their future career goal are exchanged. Notes were taken by the committee chair (the PI of this proposed project) at the luncheon. The collected data through focus groups and luncheon conversations, however, has not been analyzed.

In this project, the collected data through focus group discussions and luncheon informal group conversations/interviews will be analyzed by the investigators to generate the characteristics and attributes of the *promising* graduates. Qualitative data analysis software program, Nvivo will be used to aid the data analysis. In addition, a follow up survey will be conducted with all previously identified promising graduates to examine their professional career outcomes. Taken together, this proposed project attempts to address the following questions:

1. What are the unique characteristics and attributes of the *promising* OT graduates?
2. What are the professional career outcomes of the *promising* graduates several years after their graduation?

The proposed study is part of a longitudinal project at School of Pharmacy and Health Professions to track groups of *promising* graduates to examine the outcomes of health care programs in developing future professional leaders. The completion of the proposed project not only fulfills the current school assessment needs, but also lays the foundation for this longitudinal study for the years to come. The findings of this project will also provide insights and guidance to strengthen and improve the OTD program, especially in curriculum structure and instructional improvement, which, in turn, will ultimately improve student learning and develop future health care leaders. Additionally, findings of this project, as well as those resulting from subsequent and relevant scholarly work, will add to the body of knowledge through conference presentations and professional journal publications.

### **Project Design**

A mixed method approach will be used in this project. Qualitative data collected through three focus groups during year of 2005, 2006 and 2007 will be analyzed retrospectively using the *constant comparative methods*. Themes will be generated regarding the characteristics and attributes of the promising graduates. In addition, a survey questionnaire, *Career Development of Promising OTD Graduates* will be developed and mailed to the graduates to examine their career development since graduation. The questionnaire will be developed based on extensive literature review, the investigators' previous work as well as the outcomes of field testing of the questionnaire. The survey questionnaire will be centered on the current employment status, professional development, scholarly activities and leadership positions held. Follow up procedures will be employed via mailing to obtain a high response rate. Data analysis software programs, SPSS and Nvivo will be used to aid in the data analysis.

**Timeline of the Project** Table I illustrates the timeline and the expected outcomes of the project.

Plan	Time	Personnel	Expected Outcome
1. Submit IRB application and obtain IRB approval	02/30/08	Keli	Obtain IRB approval
2. Transcribe and analyze focus group data	05/31/08	Keli, A1 & assistant	Generate the results of the study
2. Develop, mail and analyze survey	08/31/08	Keli & A1	Conduct the survey study and generate results
3. Project status report	05/31/08	Keli	Complete a status report
5. Project sharing	10/31/08	Keli & A1	Analyze collected data
6. Dissemination: AEA report, a poster, conference presentation, etc	12/31/08	Keli	Project dissemination

**Sustainability of the project**

This project is a crucial, but only the initial step in a school wide, longitudinal study regarding future health care professional leaders. The project investigators have a lasting and strong interest in program evaluation and have been serving in the departmental and school assessment committees for many years. The sustainability of the project will be maintained due to the longitudinal and school wide project, and the investigators' interest and dedications to program evaluation and professional education.

**Expected Products:**

The products include AEA report, a poster, a conference proposal and a manuscript.

**Budget Specification**

The estimated cost of this project is \$6,201. We are requesting a total \$2,000 to cover a portion of the project expenses, particularly for the research assistant and support for our conference sharing. Uncovered expenses will be contributed by the investigators in kind.

Categories	Estimated Cost	Justification
Postage	\$.41 x 20 (participants) x 4 (mailings) x 4 (return mailings) = \$132	Initial and three follow up mailings to increase response rate.
Copies	\$.10 x 10 (ten page questionnaire) x 20 (participants) x 4 (mailings) = \$80	Making copies.
Incentive	\$10 x 20 = \$200	A small incentive (a flash drive) is budgeted for the respondents to increase response rate.
Project assistant	\$ 10 x 40 = \$400	An assistant to work 40 hours to help with the project such as data transcription/entry and dissemination efforts.
Poster	\$120 x 1 = 120	A poster will be made to help disseminate the findings of the project.
Project dissemination	Registration: \$400; Lodging, \$120x4=\$480; Airfare, \$ 400; Meal & Transportation \$ 300 Subtotal \$350+\$480+\$400+\$300=\$1580	Findings of the project will be shared at the national conference, i.e. American Occupational Therapy Association. For two presenters \$1530 x 2=\$3160
Investigators' work	In kind	Estimated 262 hours from the PI and 160 hours from Co-Investigator are needed for completion of the project.
Estimated total	\$132+\$80+\$200+\$400+\$120 +\$3160=\$4092	