

# O.T. Link



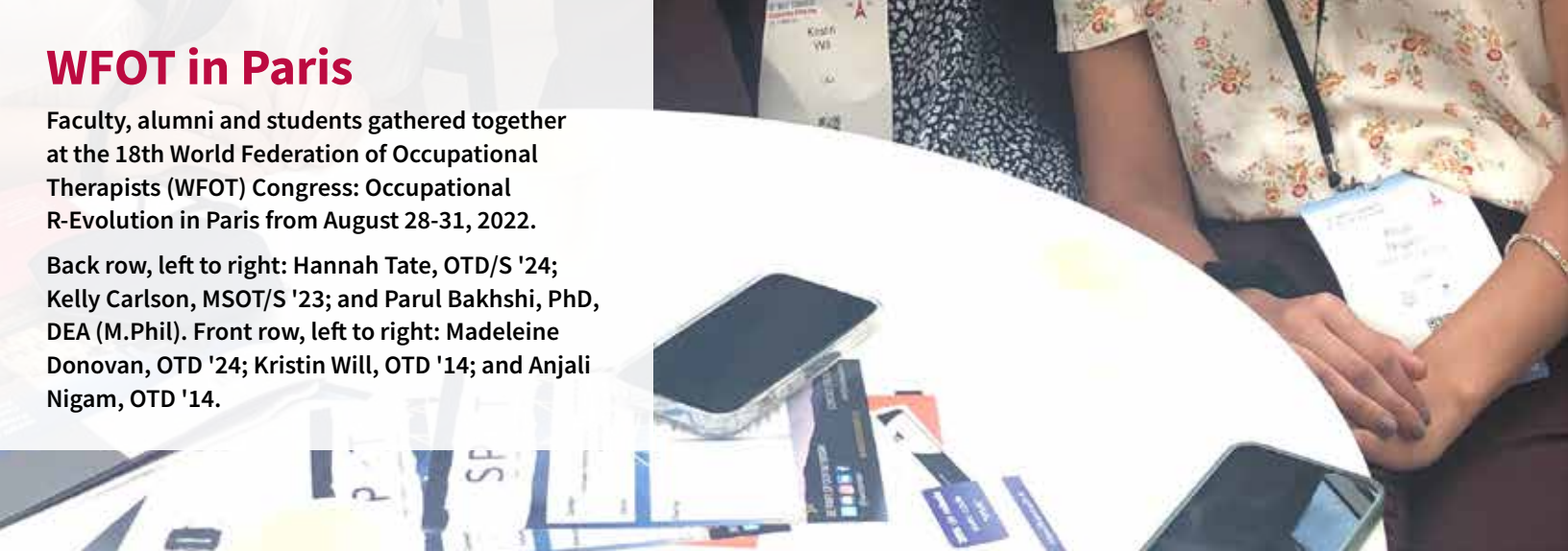
**Welcome to  
the CELC**



## WFOT in Paris

Faculty, alumni and students gathered together at the 18th World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) Congress: Occupational R-Evolution in Paris from August 28-31, 2022.

Back row, left to right: Hannah Tate, OTD/S '24; Kelly Carlson, MSOT/S '23; and Parul Bakhshi, PhD, DEA (M.Phil). Front row, left to right: Madeleine Donovan, OTD '24; Kristin Will, OTD '14; and Anjali Nigam, OTD '14.



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**Associate Dean and Director of Occupational Therapy, Elias Michael**  
**Professor of Occupational Therapy and Professor of Neurology**  
 Lisa Tabor Connor, PhD, MSOT, OTR/L

**Managing Editor and Designer**  
 Michele Berhorst

**Contributors**  
 Michele Berhorst  
 Megen Devine, MA  
 Lenin Grajo, PhD, OTR/L  
 Mario Millsap, MSOT, OTR/L  
 Duana Russell-Thomas, OTD, OTR/L  
 Stephanie Stemmler

**Photography**  
 Salma Bachelani, OTD, OTR/L  
 Parul Bahkshi, PhD, M.Phil  
 Christine Berg, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA  
 Michele Berhorst  
 Mark Gilliland  
 Sharaya Hill, MEd, OTD/S '24  
 Mario Millsap, MSOT, OTR/L  
 Washington University Student  
 Occupational Therapy Association

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Washington University in St. Louis  
 SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
 Occupational Therapy

# From the Director



**O**n Aug. 24, we proudly welcomed the MSOT '24 and OTD '25 classes to the Program in Occupational Therapy. The students come from various backgrounds: 33% of this class are from racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds underrepresented in occupational therapy, a 4% increase from the previous year. This is a result of our Admissions Committee's efforts toward creating diverse cohorts by reviewing all applicants holistically. We feel that all of our students will help shape the future of our profession through practice, research, education and advocacy.

I am excited to share with you that our new Community Experiential Learning Center (CELC) officially opened on Aug. 16 (page 4). The CELC allows faculty, students, community members and researchers to share real situations, real experiences and new space to actively engage in the health and well-being of community residents in St. Louis. Classes and learning take place through active engagement with the community, moving beyond four walls and orchestrated opportunities. Duana Russell-Thomas, OTD, OTR/L, is the CELC's director, and Mario Millsap, MSOT, OTR/L, is the CELC's coordinator and occupational therapist. We are looking forward to making the CELC a vital part of our Program.

I am also excited to introduce you to Lenin Grajo, PhD, OTR/L (page 8). He serves as the associate director of the Program, associate director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and director of the Division of Professional Education. He is a national leader, educator, researcher, pediatric occupational therapist and a champion of integrating anti-racist and inclusive pedagogy in medical and occupational therapy education. Dr. Grajo is helping us incorporate diversity, anti-racism and justice in health care in our curriculum and advancing the field of occupational therapy in new and dynamic ways.

Milliken Hand Rehabilitation Center's hand therapists assist orthopedic and plastic surgeons and physicians in providing treatment for patients with hand and upper extremity injuries (page 10). In this issue, we highlight three of our "frontline" Milliken team members: Emily Pitassi, MSOT, OTR/L, CHT; Tim Pemberton, MSOT, OTR/L, CHT; and Luu Wong, BSOT, OTR/L, CHT. Our students have the opportunity to do their Level II Fieldwork at Milliken and learn about hand therapy from our dedicated therapists, several of whom are our alumni.

This summer, we launched our Summer Pathways Program (page 14) in partnership with Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU), a historically Black, public university located in Midtown St. Louis. Eleven HSSU students participated in the two-week summer academic immersion experience to introduce them to the occupational therapy profession. It was a tremendous success due, in part, to our four wonderful student facilitators: Amber Bond, MSOT/S '23; Alissa Bradford, MSOT/S '23; Alexis DuBose, OTD/S '24; and Sharaya Hill, OTD/S '24. We look forward to offering it again next year.

As the fall semester begins to wind down, I am grateful to our faculty, clinicians, staff, students, alumni and community partners for helping us move the Program forward through their support and participation. We could not have launched the CELC without you, and I will be sharing updates in future OT Link issues on the innovative and active learning opportunities our students experience with the community in that space.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa T. Connor".

**Lisa Tabor Connor, PhD, MSOT, OTR/L**

*Associate Dean and Director of Occupational Therapy*

*Elias Michael Professor of Occupational Therapy and Professor of Neurology*

[lconnor@wustl.edu](mailto:lconnor@wustl.edu)



Kaskutas and her husband, Tony Hard, toast the start of her retirement at the Sept. 28 party.

### Kaskutas retires after 25 years of service

On Sept. 28, the Program celebrated the career and accomplishments of Vicki Kaskutas, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA, who retired from Washington University on Oct. 1.

For the past 25 years, she has served the Program as a clinician, educator, mentor, investigator and leader. Kaskutas had an active role in curriculum design, accreditation evaluations and developing procedures to improve clinical and educational outcomes. She became the director of the post-professional doctoral degree program in 2015 and the educational evaluation and quality director in 2017. She developed the student-run Hand Therapy Experiential Learning Clinic in 2018, which treated many uninsured individuals with hand conditions. The clinic's outcomes also included several peer-reviewed publications and presentations.

Kaskutas' research focused on improving worker health and safety through the study and prevention of occupational risk factors for injury and illness. She was the principal investigator on four grants and co-investigator/research coordinator on six grants focusing on ergonomics, fall prevention and technology in residential construction. Kaskutas enriched the profession through her scholarly research and various publications and book chapters.

She demonstrated her lifelong love of learning by earning a master's degree in health sciences in Health Care Services in 2000 and both a certificate in clinical investigation and a doctorate in occupational therapy in 2008. She instilled her passion for hand therapy and work injury rehabilitation in her students, many of whom have held key positions in the American Society of Hand Therapists.

Her many accolades include becoming a fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) in 2014 for her leadership in work injury prevention and research, recognition by Washington University's Academy of Educators Honor Roll in 2021 and receiving AOTA's Retired Educator Commendation in 2022.

It has been our honor to have her as a colleague and friend all these years. We wish her the very best as she embarks on her next chapter—retirement!



Left to right: Rose McAndrew, OTD; Jeanenne Dallas, MA; Kaskutas; and Macy Stonner, OTD.



Lisa Tabor Connor, PhD, with Kaskutas.

### Appointments

**Duana Russell-Thomas, OTD, OTR/L**, was appointed assistant professor of occupational therapy and medicine on June 1. She is the director of the Community Experiential Learning Center, which provides students with educational opportunities to serve the community's needs by actively engaging in the health and well-being of St. Louis residents.



Duana Russell-Thomas

**Amanda Mack, OTD, OTR/L, CLC**, was appointed assistant professor of occupational therapy and medicine on Aug. 1. She serves as the director of Post-Professional Education. Her clinical and research interests focus on health and wellness with different populations and innovative occupational therapy education.



Mandy Mack

**Brian Johnson, PhD, OTR/L**, was appointed assistant professor of occupational therapy and neurology (PEFA) on Aug. 15. His research focuses on understanding the mechanisms underlying human motor learning and memory consolidation to improve and develop motor training and rehabilitation for individuals with neurologic diagnoses.



Brian Johnson

### Want more Program news?

Stay up to date on the latest Program news by visiting our website at [ot.wustl.edu](http://ot.wustl.edu) or connecting with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.





# Bringing curriculum and community together

The Community Experiential Learning Center

By Michele Berhorst

When Lisa Tabor Connor, PhD, MSOT, OTR/L, returned to Washington University in St. Louis to become the executive director of the Program in Occupational Therapy, she came with a vision: *to embed community within occupational therapy (OT) learning.*

“One of the messages that was communicated loud and clear by the faculty was the need for innovative, contemporary learning spaces. Additionally, one of the Program’s strengths is educating future occupational therapists by providing them rich opportunities through engaging with community organizations,” says Connor. “Combining these two ground truths, the vision for the Community Experiential Learning Center (CELC) was born.”

### Design and construction

Plans to renovate the Program’s space at 4444 Forest Park Avenue began in early 2021. KWK Architects, who specialize in higher-education design, created floor plans and interior designs that would transform the space into an innovative and active learning environment. The CELC space features a 1,587-square-foot great room with modular furniture that can be rearranged as needed to accommodate a variety of curricular activities and a 247-square-foot conference room for meetings, collaborations, training and presentations. Seven breakout rooms of varying sizes

surround the great room to support small group work with community members, participant assessments and simulated clinical experiences.

The highlight of the design is the fully accessible kitchen that includes ADA-compliant countertops and appliances designed to enhance inclusion for all. The kitchen supports educational, clinical and research activities related to activity, participation and function.

Construction started in December 2021 with the demolition of the existing structure. United Construction, led by onsite project superintendents Dino Pappas and Tom Mays, was responsible for the day-to-day construction work and scheduling during the next nine months. Paul Duell, senior project manager of capital projects at Washington University, provided oversight of the entire project from start to finish. He coordinated the large team of architects, planners, engineers, contractors, facilities and Program leadership to bring Connor’s vision to life. On Aug. 16, the CELC officially opened its doors in time for the Program’s annual fall kickoff event that same week.

### VALT technology

Embedded throughout the contemporary design is the state-of-the-art Video Audio Learning Tool (VALT) system, which leverages the power of video to improve education, training and research with enterprise-class streaming technology. VALT was designed to improve clinical skills training and the assessment process by integrating audio-video capture and observation technology.

Through an easy-to-use Web interface, activities can be live-streamed and/or recorded in any CELC room, including the kitchen. VALT was also installed in the newly renovated hospital room simulation lab and classroom 509 located on the lower level. The system can capture lectures, demonstrations and presentations that happen in these spaces, and the recorded sessions will form a digital resource video library. Educators are also able to observe in real time what is happening in any room for small group activities. VALT’s technology can be used for student clinical experiential learning components so educators can review performance with students, allow students to reflect on their own performance, and



The CELC's community kitchen is fully accessible with ADA compliant countertops and appliances.



The VALT system improves clinical skills training and the assessment process by integrating audio-video capture and observation technology.



The CELC's community engagement development is guided by five pillars:

**Trauma-informed care**

**Justice, diversity, equity and inclusion**

**Promotion of civic responsibility**

**Climate justice**

**Evidence-based practice**

for faculty to provide valuable feedback to enhance skills and professional reasoning.

#### The CELC team

Duana Russell-Thomas, OTD, OTR/L, assistant professor of occupational therapy and medicine, is the CELC's director. The role is a natural fit for Russell-Thomas, who has practiced community-based OT for 20 years. She has served as a lecturer and clinical specialist in chronic disease in the Program's Community Practice since 2013. Before that, Russell-Thomas was the Community Practice manager from 2008 to 2013. Since 2010, she has led the Arthritis Center of Eastern Missouri, one of seven regional centers designed to offer arthritis-friendly physical activity and self-management programs. Her clinical interests focus on chronic disease, health disparities and trauma-informed care.

As the CELC director, Russell-Thomas provides leadership, community outreach and program development and works collaboratively with faculty to help design innovative educational experiences for students. She oversees the administration and operations of the CELC including community-led research, program evaluation and communications. Russell-Thomas is also leading efforts to build and strengthen community connections and partnerships critical to the CELC's success.

"The CELC's mission is to use state-of-the-art technology and community partnerships to provide innovative active learning opportunities that maximize

student clinical competency, advance educator growth and promote community health," Russell-Thomas explains. "We are situated in an area of St. Louis that has significant unmet health needs and marginalized community members. The CELC provides opportunities for students to work collaboratively with community members and form unique perspectives on client-centered care in an OT educational space."

It was important for Russell-Thomas to hire an occupational therapist and coordinator who understood the CELC's mission from both a student and community perspective. Mario Millsap, MSOT, OTR/L, was the ideal candidate, with clinical experience in pediatrics, acute care, home health and community-based mental health.

"I'm a Class of 2020 graduate, so to come back in a professional role as a clinician was a big moment for me because I understand how important OT is for society at large. As a student, working with individuals experiencing homelessness reinforced the immense value OT can provide to our communities when given the opportunity," Millsap shares. "I want to utilize my experiences and perspectives to help make OT an equitable, inclusive, justice-based profession for everyone."

Having a center run by two community-centered, Black OT professionals in a predominately white institution sets the CELC apart from what other OT programs offer in the way of experiential



learning. It's also significant as the OT profession itself does not represent the diversity found in the populations it serves.

"Representation matters. This is an opportunity to show others who may not have considered a career in OT that there are people that look like them in the field. For the community at large, having someone help them achieve their goals who may have a better understanding of their perspectives or life experiences can translate into better care," Millsap says.

### Increasing competency

One of the primary goals of the CELC is to address students' preparation and competency in clinical skills. Creating opportunities for all students to have more "hands-on" experiential learning is a priority. Bolstering students' confidence in their communication and professional reasoning skills in preparation for Level II Fieldwork assignments through more experiential learning with a diverse client base was the bedrock on which CELC programming was established. Although planning for the CELC began before the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus on opportunities for experiential learning was reinforced by the pandemic as fieldwork sites across the country canceled or suspended student placements indefinitely. Non-traditional fieldwork

opportunities were created by partnering with local community agencies to deliver OT services to at-risk populations virtually or by safe, limited in-person visits.

"The pandemic reinforced how critical our community partnerships are in preparing students for practice. Our partners provide direct access to people in need of the unique health-care services that OT offers," Russell-Thomas explains. "The skills and confidence students acquire through experiential learning stem from knowing they have helped someone improve their health and well-being."

In addition to clinical competency, the CELC team wants students to have cultural humility as well. People of racially and culturally diverse backgrounds, as well as people with disabilities, often experience health disparities from health-care providers. The CELC uses these five pillars as its guiding principles: trauma-informed care; climate justice; justice, equity, diversity and inclusion; evidence-based practice; and promotion of civic responsibility.

"We want our students to deliver effective, quality care to patients who have diverse beliefs, cultures, attitudes, values and behaviors. To do that, we need to build strong relationships with our partners and the people they serve," Russell-Thomas

says. "We want the CELC to be accessible and inclusive to all."

### Moving forward

The first academic year of the CELC is underway. Four faculty members have incorporated the CELC's space and technology into their courses. Initially, community members will primarily participate through course-driven experiences. Ideas, concepts and procedures are being piloted as the Program explores the CELC's capabilities. Lenin Grajo, PhD, OTR/L, who specializes in developing evaluation tools, will work with the CELC team to measure outcomes such as room/technology usage, faculty course encounters, student competency and community engagement.

"We are embarking on an exciting, new era of OT education at WashU," Russell-Thomas says. "Together, we can make the CELC a vital and essential part of the Program."

Below: Faculty and students utilize the CELC's great room.





Grajo teaches first-year students how to effectively design survey and questionnaire rating scales in the Research Designs and Use of Data course.

# Charting a new course for OT education at WashU

by Stephanie Stemmler

Lenin Grajo, PhD, OTR/L, incorporates the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and anti-racism into the curriculum to better prepare students to serve the community.

The Program in Occupational Therapy is undergoing some fundamental changes in the way the Program and the curriculum meet the needs of the next generation of occupational therapists. In the middle of these changes is Lenin Grajo, PhD, EdM, OTR/L, the Program's new director of the Division of Professional Education and associate director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Grajo, a dynamic personality who says that being an educator is the "primary core" of his whole self, is focused on how to better embed principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and anti-racism into the Program's curriculum design. "I want to see how this can be better reflected in every single course that is offered and in the methods we use in

teaching," he says. "The people we serve are diverse and rapidly changing, and health-care practitioners are not often ready for that. We need to do better to prepare our students for the diversity that is inherent in our communities so that we can reflect equity, inclusion and anti-racist principles in the care we provide."

He offers several examples. Where we may brush our hair in one specific fashion, it's not the same for people with different hair textures, different cultures or different backgrounds. Religious practices influence occupational choices. Child-rearing practices are affected by culture and other influences. The ways in which we work and participate in home activities are different. Simply put, occupational therapy (OT) practices should consider

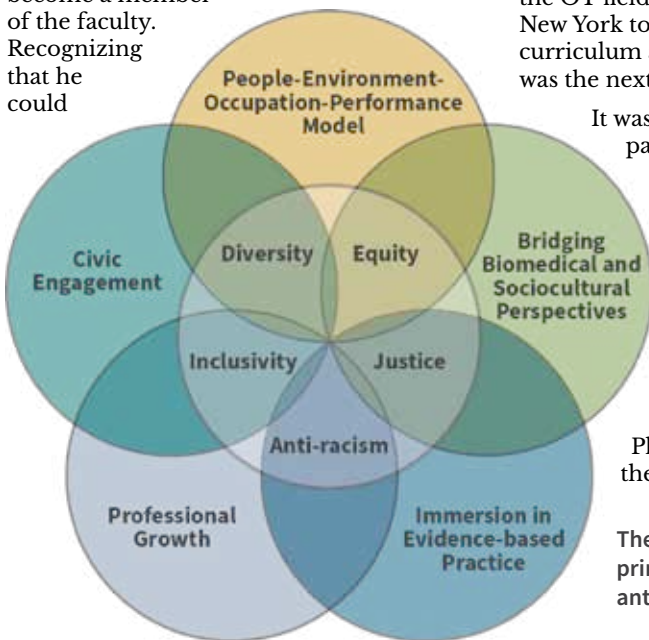
the diversity of the human population and the human experience. To do that, Grajo says, “We need to teach, innovate, impact practice and then lead.”

His timing in joining Washington University School of Medicine is perfect. With the debut of the new Community Experiential Learning Center in the Program in Occupational Therapy, Grajo’s focus is on advancing the curriculum so that students will engage immediately with faculty as well as the community not only to provide clinical services, but also to identify, research and develop novel methods, tools, metrics and programs that enhance health and overall well-being and reflect diversity, equity and inclusion.

Grajo comes to WashU from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York where he served as Director of Post-Professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy Programs and Associate Professor of Rehabilitation and Regenerative Medicine. “It was a small but innovative program in that it was the only doctoral program in the country focused on functional cognition,” he says. “It inspired me to do more to impact practice and lead.”

His journey started in the Philippines. Challenged by his aunt who raised him (whom he calls his mother) to follow a passion for education and a meaningful skilled career, he envisioned going to college to become an elementary school teacher. His aunt encouraged him to pursue studies in OT, and Grajo soon was accepted into the University of the Philippines to study OT. By age 21, he owned a private pediatric OT practice with colleagues in the Philippines and was asked to return to the university after earning his bachelor’s degree to become a member of the faculty.

Recognizing that he could



combine an OT career with an academic career focused on children and education, he applied to Harvard University to earn a master’s degree in education with a focus on child development and psychology. “I moved here with two suitcases, mainly filled with books and shoes, and \$80 in my bank account,” he says. “Throughout my days in college, I only had one pair of shoes that I wore until there were holes in the soles and I could feel the water seep in when it rained. As my career progressed, my shoes became a symbol for my hard work; step by step, it’s been a journey that is an homage to my mother, who lit that spark for education in me.”

He focused on early childhood education, with his research delving into literacy interventions for children with learning disabilities such as dyslexia. After graduation, he moved to Austin, Texas, to take a position as a pediatric occupational therapist in private practice. Soon after, a colleague mentioned a doctoral program at Texas Woman’s University School of Occupational Therapy in Dallas. “I started the program in 2011 to continue my research on advancing the role of OT in literacy,” Grajo recalls. “After completing just one semester, I saw that Saint Louis University had a faculty position open in their Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy program.” He applied, was offered the job, and spent the next several years teaching in St. Louis while traveling back and forth to Texas to earn his doctoral degree. After designing an assessment tool to measure children’s literacy for his dissertation, he was more passionate than ever about education and ways to create and enhance curricula in the OT field. The chance to move to New York to help design the OT curriculum at Columbia University was the next logical step.

It was during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, however, when Grajo took a hard look at his career path. Feeling isolated in a 650-square-foot apartment with two cats and a dog and eager to take on new leadership roles in OT education, he started to explore options. One came in an email direct from Lisa Connor, PhD, executive director of the Program in Occupational

The revised curriculum model reflects how the principles of diversity, equity, inclusivity, justice and anti-racism influence all aspects of learning.



Therapy at Washington University School of Medicine. Under Connor’s leadership, the Program was undergoing fundamental and exciting changes to its clinical practice, research and education programs. Did Grajo, Connor asked, want to be a partner in developing this new era at a nationally ranked OT program?

“In my first interview, I realized how everyone was focused on advancing the field of OT in new and dynamic ways,” says Grajo. “I wanted to be a part of that.”

He hit the ground running by participating in and initiating meetings months before he officially joined the Program in July 2022. Mirroring the university’s push to reimagine how to incorporate diversity, anti-racism and justice in health care, Grajo already has partnered with other faculty to update the curriculum. He also is mindful that underrepresented groups comprise 23% of the student population in the Program. “Yes, we want to increase that diversity among students, but even more important, we need to ensure that all of our students graduate with the understanding and critical thinking necessary to ensure that OT clinical care mirrors the diversity around us. As Dr. Connor reimagines the entire Program, we can be pioneers in how we develop the educational components that achieve that goal.”

# In good hands

Hand therapists at Milliken Hand Rehabilitation Center assist orthopedic and plastic surgeons and physicians in providing treatment for patients with hand and upper extremity injuries. Meet three members of the Milliken team and learn why they specialize in hand therapy.

by Michele Berhorst

## Emily Pitassi, MSOT, OTR/L, CHT *Therapist Specialist*

"I enjoy getting to know each of my patients and feel lucky to work in a setting that allows me to learn so much about their occupations and unique interests," says Pitassi, the lead therapist at Milliken's Chesterfield, Mo., location.

A St. Louis native, Pitassi earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Missouri in 2004 and her master's degree in occupational therapy from Washington University in 2007. As a

first-year student, one of her Level I Fieldwork placements was at Milliken. "I learned so much about upper extremity conditions and surgeries and how hand therapy can have a tremendous impact on a person's level of function. Following that experience, I knew I wanted to return to Milliken for Level II Fieldwork and pursue a career in hand and upper extremity therapy."

Pitassi has worked at Milliken for 15 years and says she often thinks about her own visits to health-care providers while she is treating patients at Milliken. "I think about the aspects of care that put me at ease, as well as those that may have been stressful for me. I reflect on those experiences often and do everything I can to ensure a positive therapy experience for the patients that come to Milliken."

That awareness guides Pitassi's approach when working with patients who are hesitant to move their hand or arm during their first visit. "I will slow the visit pace down, ensure that they feel safe

and comfortable, and spend extra time educating them about the source of their pain and what they can do to decrease it," Pitassi shares. "It's incredibly rewarding to watch these patients gain confidence and begin to move their hand and eventually incorporate it into activities that are safe for them to perform."



Outside of work, Pitassi enjoys working out, walking her dog, attending her children's sporting events, creating photo albums, and spending time with her husband and friends. These are the same types of activities she wants her patients to return to after therapy. "I have discussions with my patients about their goals and what they want or need to do. These conversations not only guide my treatment plan, but also teach me about professions and activities that I wouldn't have the opportunity to learn about otherwise."

What Pitassi enjoys most about working at Milliken is the team of therapists, physicians and support staff around her. "Everyone is incredibly knowledgeable, compassionate and committed to providing the same positive experiences for our patients as I am," Pitassi says.

and comfortable, and spend extra time educating them about the source of their pain and what they can do to decrease it," Pitassi shares. "It's incredibly rewarding to watch these patients gain confidence and begin to move their hand and eventually incorporate it into activities that are safe for them to perform."

## Tim Pemberton, MSOT, OTR/L *Occupational Therapist*

"I initially became interested in hand therapy while shadowing a hand therapist in Seattle before starting occupational therapy school. It was my first exposure to orthosis fabrication, which is now one of my favorite things about being a hand therapist," says Pemberton, an occupational therapist at Milliken's Center for Advanced Medicine location in St. Louis.

He earned his bachelor's degree in geography in 2004 from the University of Washington Bothell and his master's degree in occupational therapy in 2017 from Washington University in St. Louis. He originally joined the Milliken team in 2018 as a PRN occupational therapist and transitioned to a full-time position in 2021. One day a week, he works at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, where he fabricates orthoses and provides occupational therapy services to the acute care population.



Pemberton's love of hand therapy stems from his interest in complex anatomy and the challenge of dealing with the many different structures of the hand. Working closely with plastic and orthopedic surgeons throughout the course of the patient's treatment gives Pemberton the opportunity to learn and advance his skills.

"I enjoy treating traumatic injuries. Examples include fractures of the hand and wrist, tendon lacerations and blast injuries from fireworks. I am motivated by seeing my patients recover and return to meaningful

activities. It's a great feeling to know that I played a small role in helping an individual be able to return to doing something they love," he shares.

Outside of work, Pemberton's occupations include staying active. "I love going on walks with my wife and our dog. I also enjoy many different types of exercise, but recently I have been really into jumping rope. I have commuted to work by bicycle every day for nearly 20 years."

Teamwork is what Pemberton enjoys most about working at Milliken. "I work with an incredible team of therapists who consistently go above and beyond to help one another out and make the workday fun. I feel truly fortunate to work with such a knowledgeable, caring group of people," he says.



**Luu Wong, BSOT, OTR/L, CHT**  
*Therapist Specialist*

"I always knew that I wanted to get into health care. I enjoy taking care of others, so it was natural to get into a service career from a medical end," says Wong, a therapist specialist at Milliken's Chesterfield, Mo., location. "During my training, I had an opportunity to observe a hand therapist, and I loved what I saw. So it was a career goal to become a hand therapist in a hand clinic."

Wong achieved that goal and joined the Milliken team in 2019 as a therapist specialist. She earned her bachelor's degree in occupational therapy in 1996 from Saint Louis University and became a certified hand therapist in 2005.

"I love to rehab individuals recovering from surgeries for fractures, tendon lacerations and conditions such as Dupuytren's contracture. The most important part of my role as a hand therapist is to be an educator," Wong says. "I explain in simple terms what is going on in your hand, how the injury occurred and what the surgery did to repair it, then help my patients on their rehabilitation journey."

Originally from Vietnam, Wong came to St. Louis as a child to live with her older

brothers who raised her. She is bilingual and can help patients and their families who speak Vietnamese and may have limited English proficiency.

"I enjoy taking care of people so they return to their roles, which means taking care of themselves and others. I like being part of the equation to help others get back to life. It is the kind of care

that I would want for myself and my family," shares Wong, whose occupations focus on her family. She keeps busy by attending and volunteering at her daughter's sporting and club events and enjoys being active outdoors with her family and their dog.

Wong wanted to work at Washington University for its long-standing reputation for being a leader in education, training and research. She feels having access to top doctors and health-care

professionals translates into the best care for her patients.

"Milliken has a great commitment to service to the St. Louis community and surrounding areas. I enjoy working so closely with other hand therapists. It is amazing what we can do with our knowledge and experience in treating individuals with complex injuries. My team works with you to get you back to your life," says Wong.

Below: Tim Pemberton, MSOT, OTR/L, uses a goniometer to assess a patient's range of motion in his stiff hand.



# 2023 Outstanding Alumni Award nominations open

The Outstanding Alumni Award recognizes alumni of the Program in Occupational Therapy at Washington University School of Medicine for their individual achievements in or contributions to the field of occupational therapy in research; education; leadership; professional development; community participation; diversity, equity and inclusion; and/or by supporting the Program.

## Eligibility

- The nominee must be a graduate of the Program in Occupational Therapy at Washington University School of Medicine.
- Potential nominees who are associated with Washington University, its governing board, the State government, or State regulatory boards or agencies can be nominated only after they no longer hold their respective positions.
- Self-nominations will be considered.
- The award is to be presented only one time to an individual. Therefore, all previous recipients are ineligible for subsequent consideration.
- All nominees must be living at the time of nomination.
- Nominee must be able to attend OT Scholarship Day on April 28, 2023.

## Selection Criteria

Qualified nominees for the **Outstanding Alumni Award** should possess the following attributes:

- **Professional Achievement:** Nominees have attained prominence in their occupational therapy career through

research, education and/or clinical practice.

- **Community Participation:** Nominees have demonstrated a commitment and dedication to community participation in regard to accessibility, mobility, policy and/or advocacy.
- **Integrity and Character:** Nominees must have the highest standard of personal integrity and character.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** Nominees have demonstrated a commitment and dedication to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives locally, nationally and/or internationally.
- **Sustained Supporter:** Nominees must have supported the Program financially and/or through service.

## Nomination Materials

Materials to submit with nomination include:

1. A biographical sketch, resume or CV summarizing the nominee's achievements.

If your nominee does not have this available, please include

(i) a summary of positions and employment, leadership roles, accomplishments, previous awards and publications, and (ii) a short narrative about the person and their attributes that make them eligible for the award (see Selection Criteria).

2. Additional supportive documents (i.e., at least one letter of recommendation from a colleague, patient/client, student and/or community member).

## Nomination Process

Nominations will be accepted September 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023 and can be made online at [ot.wustl.edu/OTalumniaward](https://ot.wustl.edu/OTalumniaward).

If the nominee is selected by the committee, he or she must be in attendance at OT Scholarship Day on April 28, 2023, in St. Louis, Mo., to accept the award.

If you have any questions about the nomination or selection process, please contact Michele Berhorst at (314) 286-1606 or [berhorstm@wustl.edu](mailto:berhorstm@wustl.edu).



MATT MILLER

## We're hiring!

Our faculty, clinicians and staff maintain a focus on advancing human health by enhancing people's participation in everyday life activities and work together to bridge biomedical and sociocultural health at the person, community and population levels. The Program shares the University's commitment to equal access, consistent with its academic mission and standards, and strives to achieve excellence through the advancement of diversity, equity and inclusion. We value a structure and culture that supports all members of our community. Please visit

[ot.wustl.edu/jobs](https://ot.wustl.edu/jobs)

to explore opportunities to join us in our mission to *advance human health and well-being by maximizing people's participation in meaningful activity.*

We are pleased to announce the 2022 honorees of the Program in Occupational Therapy's Outstanding Alumni Award: Dory Sabata, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA (left), and Gary Solomon, MBA, MSOT, OTR/L, CHT (right). The awards were presented at the 14th Annual OT Scholarship Day on April 29.



## 2022 Outstanding Alumni Awardees

### **Dory Sabata, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA**

Dory Sabata, Class of 2002, is a clinical associate professor and chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy Education at the University of Kansas (KU) Medical Center, School of Health Professions. She is recognized for her role as a leader in the profession, her contributions to professional education and her clinical expertise in community-based practice and aging in place for older adults.

Sabata has taught and mentored students in the entry-level and post-professional occupational therapy programs at KU as well as in the therapeutic science doctoral program. She served as a fieldwork educator in cancer care and community-based wellness programs and as faculty preceptor in a geriatric interprofessional teaching clinic. In 2015, she became a fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association for her significant contributions to leadership, interprofessional collaboration and community-based practice. She was appointed department chair in 2020 and works tirelessly to maintain academic excellence, grow research and scholarship, and serve the greater community.

In addition to her academic career, Sabata has been an advocate for community participation in all individuals, with a focus on older adults, home modifications

and assessment. She has taught numerous workshops, serves on education and planning committees, and developed programming for the American Stroke Foundation. She has been widely published in peer-reviewed journals, authored several book chapters and presents at conferences to promote the health and well-being of older adults.

For her commitment to education, professional development and the community participation of older adults, we were honored to present the 2022 Outstanding Alumni Award to Dory Sabata.

### **Gary Solomon, MBA, MSOT, OTR/L, CHT**

Gary Solomon, Class of 1993, has worked as a clinician, educator and leader for nearly 30 years. He is being recognized for his dedication to the hand therapy profession, leadership in national organizations, commitment to educating occupational therapy students and his sustained support of the Program in Occupational Therapy.

Solomon's passion for hand therapy spans the length of his career. Since receiving his certification, he has supported the field by serving in key leadership roles for the American Society of Hand Therapists, including as president from 2016-2017,

and as a board member of the American Association for Hand Surgery from 2018-2021. He is currently the vice chair of the American Hand Therapy Foundation and a board member on the Hand Therapy Certification Commission, Inc., as well as a member of the exam committee. He often presents at national symposiums and conferences, and he teaches orthotic fabrication courses throughout the country. He is a published author of several book chapters.

Solomon is the director of therapy at Chicago Metro Hand Therapy, LLC, where he has managed therapy operations for a physician-owned upper extremity rehabilitation practice for 20 years. In addition to his full caseload, he supervises Level II Fieldwork students and helps them succeed in their career goals.

He has been a sustained supporter of the Program in Occupational Therapy, contributing to the Annual Fund for three decades. His investment has enriched the profession by making a Washington University education affordable to future generations of occupational therapy students.

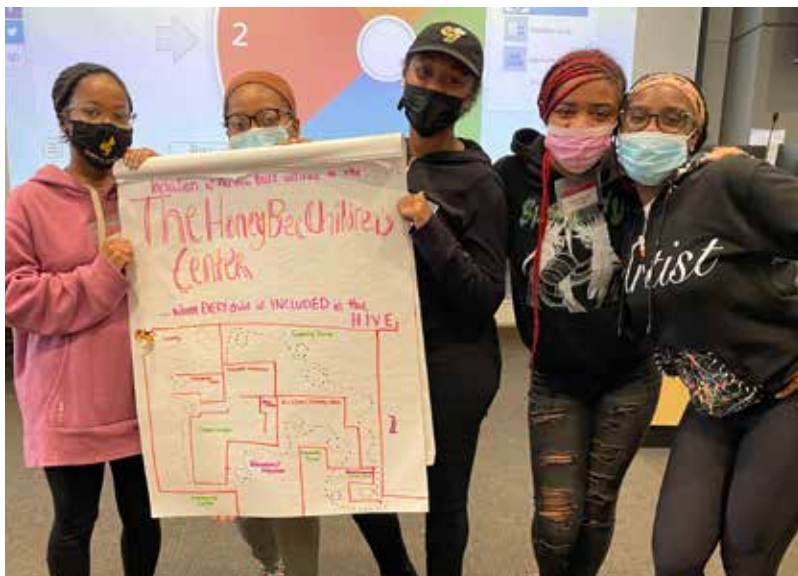
For his commitment to clinical practice, occupational therapy education and annual support of the Program, we were honored to present the 2022 Outstanding Alumni Award to Gary Solomon.

# HSSU Summer Pathways Program

Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU) in partnership with the Program in Occupational Therapy presented a two-week summer academic immersion experience focused on introducing HSSU students to the career of occupational therapy. Eleven HSSU students participated in the Summer Pathways Program.

Students learned about occupational therapy's role in stroke recovery, Parkinson's disease management, fall prevention, driving performance, hospitals and community mental health. Activities included a community outing to independent living center Paraquad, watching the movie "Crip Camp," and exploring the accessibility and usability of HSSU's library and Bosley Hall.

Student facilitators Amber Bond, MSOT/S '23; Alissa Bradford, MSOT/S '23; Alexis DuBose, OTD/S '24; and Sharaya Hill, OTD/S '24, led several activities, encouraged participation and engaged with students each day.



PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE BERG, MICHELE BERHORST, SHARAYA HILL AND MARIO MILLISAP



# Future leader

## Sharaya Hill, MEd, OTD/S '24

**Hometown:** Houston, TX

**Degrees:** BS in Psychology from Howard University; MEd in Special Education with a concentration in autism from The University of North Texas

**Leadership:** Harris-Stowe State University OT Pathways Program Student Coordinator, WashU Environmental Studies Impact Internship UJIMA Intern, WU-COTAD Event Co-Coordinator, Missouri Occupational Therapy Association advocacy week DEI presenter, American Occupational Therapy Association Assembly of Student Delegates Vice Chairperson, Community Experiential Learning Center transition management team, Pilot International Scholar

### What are your meaningful occupations?

Occupations are the activities that bring routine, functionality and purpose to life. In my lived experience, I have utilized occupations to engage in productivity, leisure and self-care. My meaningful occupations include traveling, reading, catching up with friends and family, volunteering, walking outside and enjoying cultural foods.

### What is your definition of occupational therapy?

Occupational therapy is a client-centered health-care discipline that encourages clients to engage in occupations they want and need to do. This holistic approach considers the social determinants of health and how they impact the day-to-day lives of my future clients. Occupational therapy transcends the medical model, which allows the profession to make a profound impact in community spaces where traditional health care may not be offered.

### Why did you choose the OTD degree?

I decided to pursue the OTD degree because of the opportunity to engage in OTD mentorship. Through the OTD degree, I have been afforded the opportunity for OTD mentorship with Dr. Dashner in the Washington University School of Medicine Interdisciplinary Clinic. Through this experience, I have grown as a student, critical thinker and future clinician.

### What are your career goals?

I am interested in a variety of clinical settings, and I cannot commit to just one. Due to my varied interests, my short-term plan is to become a travel therapist. This will grant me the ability to combine my love of traveling with my passion for occupational therapy and will provide further exposure to a variety of different settings. Long term, I seek to open schools and centers for persons with autism. I am excited to impact this amazing community through a unique school experience that is tailored to their strengths, building upon the strengths-based, client-centered tenets that are so engrained in the WashU OT curriculum.

### What WashU experience so far stands out to you?

Serving with WU-COTAD was amazing and truly allowed for an opportunity to further engage with the WashU OT family. One avenue for this was done through implementing the Safe Space series. This series tackled difficult topics such as racism, sexism and LGBTQ+ education without the fear of judgment. I am proud to have been afforded the opportunity and support to bring such a series to life, giving me the platform to implement these ideals to the wider national level of AOTA.

### Anything else you'd like us to know?

I would like to thank my dad, my mom and my brother for their undying support, as well as my great community of friends and mentors. My support system has played a huge role in my education, and I hope to continue making them proud.



# Student Happenings



Theraball, the annual WashU OT formal dance, was held on April 21.



On April 28, an “Inpatient FUNDamentals OT Field Day” was held to celebrate the accomplishments of second-year students.



First-year students completed the Social Identity Wheel, a tool to map out the different intersections of our social identities, on Aug. 25.



Students (and their furry friends) enjoyed the annual OT Picnic in Forest Park on Sept. 7.



Second-year students and Maria Coxton, OTD, OTR/L (far right), volunteered at the Tri My Best adaptive triathlon on Sept. 11.

## Creative designs

Students in the OT 611: Professional Immersion in Occupational Therapy course used their creativity to design pin-buttons that represent occupational therapy in a way that is meaningful to them. After designing their pins, students practiced activity analysis skills by breaking down the activity into parts and considering the demands on different motor, cognitive and processing skills.



Washington University School of Medicine  
Program in Occupational Therapy  
MSC 8505-66-1  
4444 Forest Park Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63108-2212

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**Tweets we love**  
**@WUSTLOT**

We are delighted to announce the landmark publication of the 'World Guidelines for Falls Prevention and Management for Older Adults: A Global Initiative' via @Age\_and\_Ageing <https://bgs.org.uk/wfg2022> #WorldFallsGuidelines #eugms2022  
– @GeriSoc • Sept. 30, 2022

## Upcoming events



**April 20-23, 2023**

**AOTA Inspire 2023**  
Kansas City, Missouri

Come see us at Booth #324!  
Visit [ot.wustl.edu](http://ot.wustl.edu) for the  
latest updates.



**April 28, 2023**

**OT Scholarship Day**

Graduating students share their  
work through both oral and poster  
presentations.



**May 15, 2023**

**Commencement**

Our 2023 Commencement  
Ceremony will be held in  
Graham Chapel at 1:00 p.m.  
CDT on May 15, 2023.

*The Program in Occupational Therapy is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), located at 6116 Executive Boulevard, Suite 200, North Bethesda, MD 20852-4929. ACOTE's telephone number, c/o AOTA, is (301) 652-AOTA and its web address is [www.acoteonline.org](http://www.acoteonline.org).*