

# Community



Program in Occupational Therapy | Annual Report 2022



Washington University in St. Louis

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Occupational Therapy

## ON THE COVER

**Kara Wolters, OTD '21, OTR/L,**  
uses a timer to help facilitate  
transitions between activities at  
**Lift for Life Academy.**

*Photo by Janet Frain*

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Professor of Occupational Therapy  
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# Contents

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Research
- 4 Education
- 6 Advocacy
- 8 Community partnerships
- 10 Active grants
- 11 Diversity, equity and inclusion
- 12 Faculty appointments/promotions  
In memoriam
- 13 Faculty and staff honors
- 14 Donor honor roll
- 15 Named scholarships recipients
- 16 Future leader

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# Welcome

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

Associate Dean and Director of Occupational Therapy  
Elias Michael Professor of Occupational Therapy and Professor of Neurology



The importance of community was never more evident than during the pandemic. While virtual options were used to bridge the gap, not all community members were able to access or receive the health-care services they needed. Innovative COVID-19 research, treatment and vaccine developments have allowed us to go into the community again to meet people where they are to provide the unique health-care services that occupational therapy offers. We have also been focusing on our Program's community across our three divisions: research, education and patient care. We continued to make diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) a priority in all we do. In this issue, I am excited to share with you how we are working with and building community.

Allison King, MD, MPH, PhD, (page 2) has dedicated her career to developing early intervention strategies for children with chronic diseases, particularly sickle cell disease (SCD). Her long list of research funding (page 10) is a testament to her commitment to improving care for people with SCD. In this issue, she explains how she is using a \$561,321 grant from the National Institutes of Health to address barriers to early intervention as well as to create and improve developmental screening tools for children with SCD.

Stacy West-Bruce, OTD, MSW, OTR/L, (page 4) is an integral part of the Program's Education Division and its DE&I initiatives related to education and practice. As a clinician, she became aware of systemic problems in the community that were impacting her patients and their health and wanted to address them. Her professional and personal experiences serve as the foundation for important discussions with students about race, gender and identity.

Sarah Cheatham Oberle, OTD, OTR/L, (page 6) is a pediatric occupational therapist and a strong advocate for increased resources that support early childhood development. Recently, she has taken her advocacy to the national level with her family by serving as the Missouri family representative for Think Babies' Strolling Thunder 2022. The virtual event brought her and others into direct contact with elected officials to advocate for more resources to support early childhood development.

Lauren Milton, OTD, OTR/L, (page 8) is engaging our students in the community at a whole different level. She and colleague Jessie Bricker, OTD, OTR/L, are meeting the Program's experiential learning needs while supporting the work of vital community organizations like Lift for Life Academy, an independent charter school in St. Louis City that serves students in grades K-12. There, our students help address occupational needs, provide enrichment and improve educational outcomes.

This report also spotlights our community by highlighting the accomplishments of faculty, staff and students and the impact alumni and donors (page 14) have made in the lives of our students through their support. While we have continued work to do, we are proud to report the 2022 outcomes of our DE&I efforts (page 11). By strengthening our community, we can better serve the greater community.

This year, we announced that our new Community Experiential Learning Center (CELC) will open this fall. It allows our faculty, clinicians, researchers, staff, students and the community alike access to real situations, real experiences and new space to actively engage in the health and well-being of residents in St. Louis. The CELC provides innovative active-learning opportunities that maximize student clinical competency, advance educator growth and promote community health. I am looking forward to featuring the CELC's first-year outcomes in our next annual report.





**King and Elizabeth Taaffe (standing), clinical research coordinator for the Child Health and Education Laboratory, review study requirements and progress with a research participant.**



# Research

Pediatric hematologist/oncologist Allison King, MD, MPH, PhD, is using her expertise in neurologic and cognitive functioning to redefine early intervention strategies for children with chronic diseases, particularly sickle cell disease (SCD).

King, a professor of occupational therapy, medicine, pediatrics, surgery and education in the Washington University Program in Occupational Therapy, studies how such diseases alter cognition and then how the environment influences early childhood development and participation.

“I want to know why children with SCD often have cognitive deficits and then identify ways to mitigate those deficits as they grow older,” she says.

Her decades-long research has resulted in growing awareness of the benefits of early screening and intervention services for children with sickle cell disease (SCD). This year, Tennessee’s Department of Education and Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities added SCD to their list of pediatric conditions covered by early intervention services. State officials noted that the addition was prompted, in part, because of ongoing research by King and her colleagues. Now, King is using a \$561,321 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to address barriers to early intervention as well as to create and improve developmental screening tools for children with SCD.

## Prevalence

An estimated 2,000 children are born in the United States with SCD each year, making it the most common inherited blood disorder. Children with the disease often develop chronic anemia and have a higher risk for strokes and cognitive deficits.

Medically, researchers have addressed the issue of stroke risk and the link to cognitive problems. Numerous studies have found that silent strokes are a primary contributor to cognitive deficits in children with SCD. While the U.S. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute has guidelines to support transcranial Doppler screening of children with SCD to check for hidden strokes, guidelines for cognitive screenings are not readily in use.

“The need for these screening tools is critical because half of all preschool-aged children with SCD have developmental delays,” stresses King. “We need to have

protocols or a systemic method to assess young children and then offer evidence-based interventions that will ameliorate these deficits so that the children will be on par with their peers when they enter grade school.”

King’s work in the mechanisms behind SCD and its impact on early childhood development began while she was in medical school at the University of Missouri-Columbia. There, during an elective pediatric neurology rotation, she saw firsthand the benefits of rehabilitation in treating patients with neurologic deficits. She also helped to care for many children with SCD. She then transitioned to Washington University School of Medicine to complete a residency in pediatrics and a fellowship in pediatric hematology and oncology. Here, she connected and conducted clinical research with Michael DeBaun, MD, MPH, a renowned researcher who led a large, NIH-sponsored, international clinical trial in SCD. Called the Silent Cerebral Infarct (SIT) Multi-Center Trial, the groundbreaking study found that regular blood transfusions significantly reduced the recurrence of strokes in children with sickle cell anemia.

During that study, King pursued her own questions about cognitive delays and educational attainment, wondering if the deficits were caused by the disease itself or an environmental factor, such as poverty, stress, or lack of access to social and educational services. That research, subsequently published in the *American Journal of Hematology* in 2014, found that household per capita income is more associated with grade retention than is the presence of a silent stroke in children with SCD. The results showed her that both medical and educational interventions were needed to ensure that children with SCD could “catch up” developmentally with their peers when they entered school.

Joining the faculty at WashU, King used her first career development award to conduct cognitive assessments on children with SCD who did not have a history of stroke. She also reached out to Parents as Teachers, a local (now global) organization that works with school districts to support and provide resources to parents to enhance engagement and early learning. When some school districts started cutting back on the program, King applied for a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to open WashU’s own Parents as Teachers service. “We



**Members of King’s Child Health and Education Laboratory (left to right): Elizabeth Taafe, Nai Qashou, King and Abigail Picinich.**

launched it and approached families of children who were less than 3 years old,” King explains. “We did developmental testing at the beginning and end of their participation in the program and found that home visitations and the resources we provided dramatically increased cognitive development by half of a standard deviation point, which was significant.” It was this research that ultimately prompted the state of Tennessee to include early education intervention for children with SCD.

King now has multiple collaborators working with her to standardize a screening tool and referral process. They include school districts and colleagues from occupational therapy, neurology, pediatrics, public health, education, social work and psychology. Already, she and her team have surveyed almost 100 pediatricians in the region to find out how and when children with SCD are being screened for developmental delays. “In addition to the NIH grant to identify barriers and develop new screening tools, I have a separate grant that will allow us to build relationships and offer training and education within school systems,” she says. “The reality is that sickle cell is an invisible condition. Unless someone chooses to share that they or their child has the disease, no one really knows if you have it, so teachers may not consider a cognitive deficit versus a behavior problem.”

She adds, “We can’t be so myopic to think about this just as a blood disorder. By working on the factors that drive cognitive delays and creating evidence-based early intervention strategies, we can give kids the best opportunity to succeed.”

# Education



**Top photo: Lenin Grajo, PhD, OTR/L, presented West-Bruce with the 2022 Educator of the Year Award.**



**Bottom photo: West-Bruce discusses the use of adaptive eating utensils with older adults.**

On July 14, 2022, Stacy West-Bruce, OTD, MSW, OTR/L, instructor in occupational therapy and medicine, was honored with the Program in Occupational Therapy's Educator of the Year Award. West-Bruce, who joined the Program in May 2021, has become an integral part of the Program's Education Division and its diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives related to education and practice. Her professional and personal experiences not only enrich her courses, but serve as the foundation for important discussions about race, gender and identity.

West-Bruce grew up in University City, a suburb of St. Louis City known for its close-knit community and diverse population. "I like to say I went to school with people who graduated and went to Harvard, people who went to prison, and everything in between," West-Bruce shares. It was her high school science teacher, Tony Thomas, who steered her toward occupational therapy (OT). "When I told him I was thinking about becoming a physical therapist, he asked if I'd heard of OT. I said no, and he told me, 'Well, go look it up.'"

She did and found that OT offered a holistic, relational approach to care. West-Bruce attended Tennessee State University (TSU), a historically Black college, where she pursued her bachelor's degree in OT. Health issues following freshman year led her to transfer home to Saint Louis University (SLU) to continue her studies and earn her degree in 2000. "I was the first and only Black person in the program. It was a huge culture shock at first compared to TSU," she admits. "During that time, SLU hired their first Black professor who was also a mental health occupational therapist. Her mentorship and guidance sparked my interest in working with that population."

West-Bruce left St. Louis for Chicago and began her career at Rush Presbyterian Hospital working primarily with adults with psychiatric illness. After a while, she began to see several of her patients who had stabilized return to the hospital. She expanded her OT lens to population health. "Living in a big city like Chicago, I became aware of systemic problems. I started to wonder what was happening in the community to bring patients back. I also noticed things like how the same grocery chain was dramatically different in a predominately Black neighborhood in the south side versus in a west suburb. This awareness led me to pursue a master's degree in social work so I could have the tools to address what I was seeing."

She returned to St. Louis to attend the Brown School at Washington University for her graduate studies. During that time, West-Bruce discovered her passion for older adults while working in nursing homes and skilled

nursing facilities and observing issues that population faced. "As a society, we don't value our older adults very well or how important independence is to them. The reimbursement structure made it difficult to get them the services or support they needed. Whenever possible, I would advocate for my patients so they could live the lives they want and deserve to live."

After graduating in 2004, West-Bruce worked a series of jobs in different settings in clinical, management and director roles. There were times when she was one of the few therapists of color on staff and experienced racism or bias from patients or colleagues. "You sometimes heard things you didn't want to hear. It wasn't always the result of the patient's cognitive deficits or diagnosis either. Occupational therapists elevate patient needs, but that does not mean that we have to be treated poorly or disrespected. If a situation feels unsafe, it is okay to have someone else work with the patient or have another colleague join you."

Eventually, it was the barriers to care, reimbursement issues and productivity expectations that led West-Bruce to shift her career focus to education. She returned to SLU and earned her doctorate in occupational therapy in 2016. West-Bruce then worked in the quality and safety department of a large health-care ministry and started a consulting business for OT student fieldwork experiences in community-based settings. She was also an adjunct professor at St. Louis Community College, Maryville University and SLU before joining the Program's faculty.

As the course master for Professional Identity and Practice I, she teaches students the importance of aligning the ethics, standards and guidelines of the profession with their authentic selves. "They don't need to fit into a mold, and that extends to the way they speak, their appearance, sexual orientation or gender identity. You bring who you are to the profession and create your own unique, professional identity."

Bringing diversity to the OT profession requires challenging previously held beliefs and providing brave spaces in the classroom for open and honest dialog. "I understand that sometimes students are afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing, but this is the place to challenge themselves, dig in and do the hard work before they are in practice. These things matter and exist in all settings. We are not treating body parts; we treat people and populations. We all have a responsibility to listen, learn and do our part to make our profession diverse, equitable and inclusive for all."



West-Bruce demonstrates how to use a button hook dressing aid.

PHOTOS BY MICHELE BERHORST







The Oberle Family (left to right): Sarah, Ellis, August Ann and Kyle.



# Advocacy

Sarah Cheatham Oberle, OTD, OTR/L, is a strong advocate for increased resources that support early childhood development. A pediatric occupational therapist, Oberle is part of the Program in Occupational Therapy's Clinical Services Program and works onsite with children ages 3-12 at the Central Institute for the Deaf. Her role there enables her to engage both children and their families in resource identification and cognitive skills development.

A chance email from a colleague in the Program prompted Oberle to take her advocacy to a national level. This year, she, her husband, Kyle; and their two children, August Ann, age 4, and Ellis, age 2, served as the Missouri family representative for Think Babies' Strolling Thunder 2022.

Think Babies is the advocacy arm for the ZERO TO THREE National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families. Established in 1973, ZERO TO THREE focuses on the first three years of a child's life and works to translate research related to early childhood development into solutions that have a direct impact on families.

"The key for the organization is that sensory pathways such as hearing, language and higher cognitive function all peak by the first three years of life," notes Oberle. "Therefore, it advocates for programs needed to ensure that children thrive in those early years."

As part of the organization's advocacy efforts, Think Babies coordinates an annual event called Strolling Thunder to directly connect families with elected officials. Several key issues for reform are highlighted, including increased paid family leave; high-quality, affordable childcare; funding for early Head Start programs; and more services targeting infant and early childhood mental health. It's the last issue that caught Oberle's eye—and passion.

"We are very transparent in that my husband is diagnosed with bipolar disorder and still is a fully functioning adult with a full-time career as a high school Spanish teacher, and we have a wonderful family," says Oberle. "We also had to handle the challenges of raising a child who really needed mental health services as a toddler. So I looked at the Strolling Thunder advocacy issues and realized I could represent not only as an occupational therapist, but also as a parent who needed to find these services."

Oberle recalls the time when the challenges in her family became overwhelming. In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Six weeks into the pandemic, Oberle gave birth to her

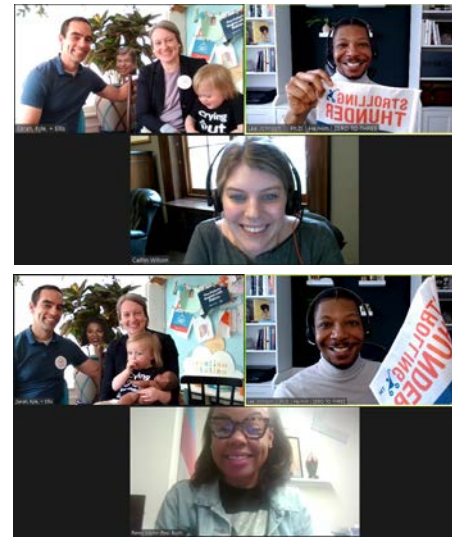
second child. "In the midst of all that, Kyle had a manic episode and was hospitalized for a short period of time. I was by myself with a newborn and a toddler who still had huge tantrums, and I really was just in survival mode."

Periodically while at work, Washington University would send mental health awareness alerts to all employees to help handle the stress of COVID and other aspects of life. In one that Oberle received, there was a list of child psychology services. She asked for an appointment, and soon August Ann was receiving the treatment she needed, and Kyle and Sarah were enrolled in parenting therapy, which taught them coping and intervention strategies. As they were made aware of all the resources that were available, Oberle then received the "ping" about Think Babies.

"I immediately saw the whole landscape from personal to professional, and I decided to jump on this opportunity," she says. In May, she was among family representatives from all 50 states and the District of Columbia who participated in Strolling Thunder 2022. The virtual event brought her and others into direct contact with elected officials to advocate for more resources to support early childhood development. "I did feel like I was heard, and telling my own story was therapeutic."

In addition to her work at the Central Institute for the Deaf, Oberle provides occupational therapy services for children transitioning from a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) to home. She also mentors doctoral students in the Program's Deafness Occupational Therapy Support (DOTS) Laboratory, which works to combine occupational therapy with skills development and cognitive enhancement for children with hearing loss. Within the lab, Oberle created Train Your Brain, a hands-on, curriculum-based cognitive development program designed for children ages 8-16. Train Your Brain is now used in after-school programs in the region for children with hearing loss.

Of her time with Think Babies, Oberle adds, "I really hope that seeing it from both sides and talking about my experiences carries weight. Working with Think Babies gave me a new perspective. I've been the client and the parent. I'm advocating on the professional level now, and it inspires me to do more."



**Above: Screenshots of a virtual Zero to Three meeting the Oberle family attended with Caitlin Wilson, Lee Johnson III, PhD, and Raven Martin.**

# Community partnerships



**Top photo: Wolters and students play a personal space-themed board game.**



**Bottom photo: Wolters leads a lesson about maintaining personal space.**

Lauren Milton, OTD, OTR/L, was searching for a way to make management coursework more experiential. A presentation at a teaching and learning conference by Brooke Flinders, DNP, RN, APRN-CNM, FACNM, a professor of nursing at Miami University in Ohio, inspired Milton and set her on a mission to engage occupational therapy (OT) students in the community at a whole different level.

“She had published a partnership model for service-learning programs that connected teaching, scholarship and service. It was highly influential to me as an educator, collaborating with other faculty members to attach management learning activities to what students were already doing out in the community,” Milton explains. “One of my former colleagues and I built a sustainable, centralized service-learning model to place students in one community setting where they could dig deep into the programming and services instead of going to multiple places for learning activities.”

Fast-forward to 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic led to complete cancellation of traditional Level I Fieldwork placements and significant loss of Level II placements. As Jessie Bricker, OTD, OTR/L, Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, actively sought non-traditional fieldwork opportunities with community partners who had lost volunteer support due to the pandemic, Milton and Bricker quickly realized there was an opportunity to meet the Program’s experiential learning needs while also supporting the work of vital community organizations. One of those organizations was Lift for Life Academy (LFLA), an independent charter school in St. Louis City that serves students in grades K-12. Before the pandemic, the school had dozens of volunteers each week to tutor, read to students and assist with programming. The restrictions and safety protocols took the volunteers and their support away. The school had a need, and Milton found the right partner to implement her model and build a deeper relationship with a community organization.

“It was a win-win opportunity, as we were able to place our fieldwork and capstone students there to work in a classroom setting with their elementary students to address occupational needs, provide enrichment and improve educational outcomes,” Milton says.

The Level II Fieldwork students conducted needs assessments with students and teachers to identify the environmental factors that impact the students’ abilities to learn and develop such as poverty, sleep habits, stress

and trauma. They utilized Dr. Susan Bazyk’s program “Refreshing Recess” to facilitate play, address conflicts and promote positive mental health. It had a positive effect on classroom learning and behaviors. Students developed their own program, “Friendship Circles,” for first- and second-graders that provided a mini lesson and activity each week related to social-emotional learning.

Since beginning the partnership with LFLA in May 2021, Milton and Bricker have supervised a total of 12 students in Level II placements with the school. In addition, Milton has been able to support her mentored scholarship students, doctoral capstone students, and Level I Fieldwork students in ongoing projects and health initiatives at the school, expanding the visibility and value of OT services in supporting the needs of LFLA students. The partnership with the Program was so successful that LFLA hired Kara Wolters, OTD ’21, who completed her Level II Fieldwork and capstone project there, as a full-time school-wide occupational therapist.

“I am grateful that I had the opportunity to complete my second Level II Fieldwork and my capstone at LFLA. I immersed myself in program development, built relationships with LFLA staff and students, learned about the school system, and created a job for myself. It was such a valuable experience and prepared me to become LFLA’s occupational therapist. I love what I do, and I would not be here if it had not been for the Washington University OT and LFLA partnership,” Wolters explains.

Two more capstone students and another Level II Fieldwork student will be at LFLA in fall 2022. Milton will also have several lab students there every Wednesday to implement specific programming that addresses positive mental health promotion and prosocial behaviors such as gratitude, kindness and empathy. “Another key component of this model is sustainability. Our students are there every week working with their students, making connections and providing consistency. Having Kara there full-time and as a fieldwork educator in the future will only strengthen our relationship with LFLA and their students,” Milton says.





# Active grants July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

**Peggy Barco, OTD, OTR/L, CDRS, FAOTA**  
**Patient Engagement Intervention in Inpatient Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation**  
Funded by Craig H. Neilsen Foundation's Psychosocial Research Grants

**Rural Driving Study and Traffic Signs**  
Funded by MoDOT

**M. Carolyn Baum, PhD, OTR, FAOTA**  
**Multicenter Career Development Program for Physical and Occupational Therapy**  
Funded by US NIH NICHD K12HD055931

**Schultz Lifestyle Profile Series**  
Funded by Schultz Family Support Fund

**Chih-Hung Chang, PhD**  
**IMPACT-Instrument to Measure Pain and Assess Correlation to Treatment**  
Funded by subaward from Bentechnology's US NIH SBIR award R43DA046974

**Erin Foster, PhD, OTD, OTR/L**  
**Prospective Memory Impairment in Parkinson Disease-related Cognitive Decline: Intervention and Mechanisms**  
Funded by US NIH R01AG065214

**Strategy-based Cognitive Intervention for Parkinson Disease: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial**  
Funded by US NIH award R21AG063974

**Kelly Harris, PhD, CCC-SLP**  
**Barriers and Facilitators to Implementing Academic Supports in Pediatric Asthma**  
Funded by US NIH award KL2TR002346

**Developing an Equity-Focused Understanding of School Health and Engagement: Building a Research-Practice Partnership**  
Funded by Washington University's Institute for Public Health and the ICTS - Partnership Development & Sustainability Support Funding Program through the CTSA from the NCATS at the US NIH award U11 TR002345

**Diversity Supplement on Allison King, MD, PhD, parent award "The Implementation of Cognitive Screening and Educational Support to Improve Outcomes of Adolescents and Young Adults with Sickle Cell Disease: From Clinic to the Community and Back"**  
Funded by US NIH NHLBI U01HL133994

**Leveraging mHealth to Mitigate the Impact of COVID-19 in African American Communities**  
Funded by subaward from Augusta University's US NIH award R25HL106365

**PRIDE-Functional and Translational Genomics of Blood Disorders**  
Funded by subaward from the University of Cincinnati's Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc. 2020 COVID-19 Award

**Catherine Hoyt, PhD, OTD, OTR/L**  
**Detecting Developmental Delay among Infants and Toddlers with Sickle Cell Disease**  
Funded by US NIH NHLBI K12HL137942

**Perinatal Arterial Stroke: A Multi-site RCT of Intensive Infant Rehabilitation (I-ACQUIRE) Study**  
Funded by subaward from University of Cincinnati on behalf of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University on US NIH NINDS U01NS106655

**Use of Early Intervention Among Children with Sickle Cell Disease**  
Funded by St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

**Utilization of Developmental Screening and Early Intervention in Sickle Cell Disease**  
Funded by US NIH UL1TR002345 CTRFP through the Pilot Translational and Clinical Studies function of the WU ICTS

**Allison King, MD, PhD**  
**ASH Research Collaborative Clinical Trials Network**  
Funded by ASH Registry, Inc. d/b/a ASH Research Collaborative award

**Data Strategy Consortium for the NHLBI Cure Sickle Cell Initiative**  
Funded by subaward from Research Triangle Institute's US NIH NHLBI award OT3HL147798

**Engaging Parents of Children with Sickle Cell Anemia and their Providers in Shared-Decision Making for Hydroxyurea**  
Funded by subaward from Children's Hospital Medical Center's PCORI award CDR-1609-36055

**Heartland/Southwest Sickle Cell Disease Network**  
Funded by US HRSA, Sickle Cell Treatment Demonstration Program award U1EMC27865

**Impact of Hearing Impairment on Cognitive Function and Quality of Life in Pediatric Cancer Survivors**  
Funded by Children's Discovery Institute

**Implementation of Evidence Based Care for the Acute Treatment of Sickle Cell Disease Pain**  
Funded by subaward from The Medical College of Wisconsin's US NIH NHLBI award U01HL143477

**Sickle Cell Anemia Neurodevelopmental Screening (SCANS) – Mentoring and Research in Patient Oriented Research**  
Funded by US NIH NHLBI K24HL148305

**(SCDCARRE Trial) 1/2 Sickle Cell Disease and Cardiovascular Risk – Red Cell Exchange Trial**  
Funded by subaward from The University of Pittsburgh's US NIH NHLBI award UH3HL143192

**(SCIENCE) Sickle Cell Improvement: Enhancing Care in the Emergency Department**  
Funded by subaward from The Medical College of Wisconsin's US NIH NHLBI award U01HL159850

**Symptom Screening Linked to Care Pathways for Children with Cancer: A Cluster Randomized Trial**  
Funded by subaward from The Hospital for Sick Children's (Toronto) US NIH NCI award R01CA251112

**The Epidemiology of Silent and Overt Strokes in Adults with Sickle Cell Disease: A Prospective Cohort Study**  
Funded by Global Blood Therapeutics, Inc.

**The Implementation of Cognitive Screening and Educational Support to Improve Outcomes of Adolescents and Young Adults with Sickle Cell Disease: From Clinic to the Community and Back**  
Funded by US NIH NHLBI U01HL133994

**Kerri Morgan, PhD, OTR/L, ATP**  
**Adapting mHealth Technology to Improve Patient Activation and Overall Wellness for Persons with Disabilities**  
Funded by the Foundation for Barnes Jewish Hospital/ WU ICTS

**Feasibility of a Community-Based Exercise Intervention for Persons with Spinal Cord Injury**  
Funded by NIH/NICHD K12HD055931 Multicenter Career Development Program for Physical and Occupational Therapy Comprehensive Opportunities in Rehabilitation Research Training Program

**Wheelchair Propulsion Training for Manual Wheelchair Users with Spinal Cord Injury**  
Funded by Craig H. Neilsen Foundation Spinal Cord Injury Research on the Translational Spectrum

**Benjamin Philip, PhD**  
**Interhemispheric Communication and Compensation in Peripheral Nerve Injury**  
Funded by US NIH NINDS R01NS114046

**Motor Imagery for Peripheral Nerve Recovery**  
Funded by American Society of NeuroRehabilitation Clinical Research Network Task Force

**Neuroimaging Predictors of Upper Limb Prosthesis Adoption**  
Funded by Washington University's The Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology

**Quantitative Handwriting Assessment Tool for Healthy and Impaired Children**  
Funded by subaward from NewVentureIQ's US NIH STTR award R41HD097833

**Duana Russell-Thomas, OTD, OTR/L**  
**Chronic Disease Self-Management Education**  
Funded by Subaward from University of Missouri's Administration for Community Living Administration on Aging Chronic Disease Self-Management Education State award 90CSSG0010

**Regional Arthritis Center – Greater St. Louis Region**  
Funded by US MO DHSS

**Jaclyn Schwartz, PhD, OTR/L**  
**Community Participation through Personalized Accessibility Information: The Access Ratings NextGen App**  
Funded by subaward from University of Wisconsin's US HHS NIDILRR 90IFDV0006

**Medication Adherence After Stroke**  
Funded by US NIH R03HD097729

**Emily Somerville, OTD, OTR/L**  
**Addressing Mental Health in Older Adults**  
Funded by WU IPH Pitch Partners2

**Tailored Medication Management Intervention for Older Adults**  
Funded by The American Occupational Therapy Foundation Intervention Research Grant

**Susy Stark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA**  
**Building Capacity to Improve Community Participation for People Aging with Long-Term Disability Through Evidence-Based Strategies**  
Funded by US HHS-NIDILRR 90DPCP0001

**COMPASS: A Novel Transition Program to Reduce Disability after Stroke**  
Funded by US NIH NICHD R01HD092398

**Falls: A Marker of Preclinical Alzheimer's Disease**  
Funded by US NIH NIA R01AG057680

**Removing Home Hazards for Older Adults Living in Affordable Housing**  
Funded by US HUD MOHHU0040-17

**Successful Aging in Place: PACE and WU**  
Funded by Washington University, Institute for Public Health and the ICTS-PDSS Funding Program through the CTSA of the NCATS at the US NIH award U11 TR002345

## Acronyms

ASH = American Society of Hematology; CTRFP = Clinical and Translational Research Funding Program; CTSA = Clinical and Translational Science Award; DHSS = Department of Health and Senior Services; HRSA = Health Resources and Services Administration; HSS = Health & Human Services; ICTS = Institute for Clinical and Translational Sciences; NCATS = National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences; NCI = National Cancer Institute; NHLBI = National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute; NICHD = National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; NIDILRR = National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research; NIH = National Institutes of Health; NINDS = National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke; PDSS = Partnership Development & Sustainability Support; SBIR = Small Business Innovation Research; STTR = Small Business Technology Transfer; WU = Washington University



# Diversity, equity and inclusion

We made a commitment in our 2020 Annual Report to report our diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) progress each year. Below are the admission, recruitment, equity, programs, reporting, task force and presentation outcomes we have made this past year. We are committed to the DE&I goal we have set and will continue working toward that goal in fiscal year 2023. We recognize that we have continued work to do and are committed to doing what it takes for our Program to achieve our ideals and live our values.



## Admissions and Student Recruitment

- Admissions committee works toward creating diverse cohorts
  - All applicants reviewed holistically
  - Underrepresented minority (URM) candidates given additional consideration
  - URM comprise 23% of 2022-2023 cohort, a 4% increase from previous year



## Faculty and Staff Recruitment

- Progress made in increasing faculty and staff diversity in FY22
  - 1 faculty
  - 7 staff



## Educational Equity

- All first-year students received WashU OT laptops for technology equity
- All lectures were recorded for student learners
- All faculty and first-year students received Mental Health First Aid training
- Enhanced efficiency, collaboration and communication systems between faculty and students to strengthen timely identification and provision of needed supports
- Strengthened collaboration with Disability Resources office to identify and strengthen ways to support students who need educational accommodations



## HSSU Summer Pathways Program

- Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU), a historically Black college, in partnership with the Program developed a two-week summer academic immersion experience focused on introducing HSSU students to the career of occupational therapy (OT).
  - Program held in July and August 2022
  - 11 HSSU students participated
  - Two OT topics presented each day



## SAFE Report: Summary of Mistreatment, Unprofessional Behaviors, Microaggressions and Disruptive Behaviors

- Data from 34 participants of the OTD 2022 cohort was collected late spring/early summer
- Report showed an overall safe culture with several areas for improvement:
  - Public humiliation (9%), performing personal errands (13%), subject to offensive remarks (9%), lower evaluations because of gender (3%) and subject to negative or offensive behavior (3%).
- SAFE survey will be disseminated each year to graduating classes
- 100% compliance, with faculty, staff and clinicians (identified as those who engage with our learners) completing the three SAFE educational modules



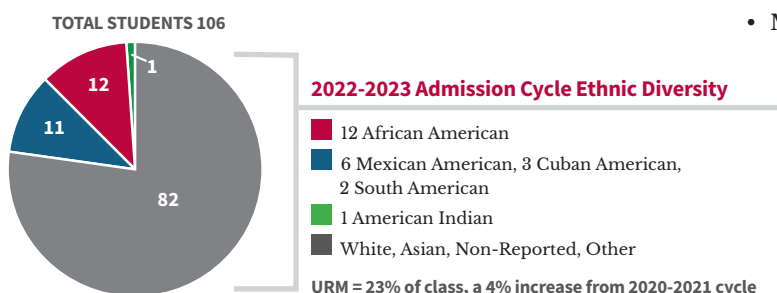
## Teaching Resources Task Force

- The task force was IRB-approved to conduct curriculum-wide analysis. Outcomes included:
  - Through discussion with faculty, incorporating targeted content within existing courses that unpack DE&I discourses in depth
  - Engaging students in analyses of complex issues (i.e., the climate crisis) and guiding them to reflect on their roles as occupational therapists in building more just societies
  - Building specific content pertaining to the intersection of OT and human rights, global and social justice, and sustainable development



## WU-COTAD

- The Washington University chapter of the Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (WU-COTAD) held five Safe Space events to foster dialogue and discussion:
  - LGBTQ+ Culture and Health Care
  - Coming to America: Immigrant Experiences
  - Gender Inequality in OT
  - Black Experiences
  - Mental Health



# Faculty appointments/promotions



Jaclyn Schwartz



Duana Russell-Thomas



Christine Berg



Erin Foster



Kelly Harris



Susy Stark



Quinn Tyminski

## Appointments

Jaclyn Schwartz, PhD, OTR/L, was appointed assistant professor of occupational therapy and neurology on Aug. 16. Her research focuses on enhancing medical adherence in people with disabilities so that they may experience better well-being and quality of life.

Duana Russell-Thomas, OTD, OTR/L, was appointed assistant professor of occupational therapy and medicine (PEFA) on June 1. She is the director of the Program's new educational center opening in the fall of 2022. The Community Experiential Learning Center will serve the community's needs by actively engaging in the health and well-being of St. Louis residents.

## Promotions

Christine Berg, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, was promoted to professor of occupational therapy and neurology on Jan. 1. Berg's clinical research interests include participation in youth with chronic conditions transitioning to adult roles (employment, higher education), building staff capacity to work with infants and toddlers in early childhood centers, and topics of toxic stress and trauma-informed practice.

Erin Foster, PhD, OTR/L, OTD, was promoted with tenure to associate professor of occupational therapy, neurology and psychiatry on Jan. 1. Foster's research involves everyday cognitive functioning and its relevance to occupational performance,

participation and well-being among individuals with chronic neurological conditions. She focuses on the development of more effective and comprehensive rehabilitation programs for individuals with neurological disorders and cognitive dysfunction.

Kelly Harris, PhD, CCC-SLP, was promoted to assistant professor of occupational therapy and surgery (public health sciences) on Jan. 1. Harris' research examines the interdependence of chronic disease, child development and educational outcomes for youth in urban and suburban contexts and the use of dissemination and implementation science to improve health and educational equity.

Susy Stark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, was promoted to professor of occupational therapy, neurology and social work on Jan. 1. Stark's clinical translational research seeks to develop and test the efficacy and effectiveness of compensatory interventions aimed at improving an older adult's ability to age at home safely, elucidate their mechanism of action and implement programs to improve health outcomes.

Quinn Tyminski, OTD, OTR/L, BCMH, was promoted to assistant professor of occupational therapy and psychiatry on Jan. 1. Tyminski's clinical interests include improving occupational participation and quality of life for populations experiencing marginalization through providing occupation-based services targeted at improving life skills and community re-integration.



Binyam Nardos

## In memoriam

Binyam Nardos, PhD, instructor in occupational therapy and neurology, died January 29, 2021, in St. Louis. He was 39.

Nardos earned his bachelor's degree in economics from Franklin & Marshall College in 2004 and his doctoral degree in neuroscience from Washington University School of Medicine in 2015. He completed his post-doctoral training at Washington University and then at Oregon Health Sciences University from 2016 to 2021. Nardos joined the faculty of the Program in Occupational Therapy at Washington University in August 2021. He was interested in investigating the brain basis of cognitive

learning (or re-learning) to work toward the goal of identifying a "brain signature" of successful cognitive learning approaches to benefit the field of stroke rehabilitation.

Nardos' hometown was Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and he had strong ties to the Ethiopian community in St. Louis. He was a co-founder of the Ethiopian Medical Book Drive at Washington University and served as a mentor to high school and college students from underrepresented minority communities through several programs with the goal of advancing their careers in science, technology, engineering, math and medical science fields.



# Faculty and staff honors

*The Program in Occupational Therapy's faculty and staff were honored this past year with awards and professional accomplishments.*

## **Christine Berg, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award**

Berg received the Lifetime Achievement Award recognizing outstanding contributions in health science education from the Academy of Educators on Oct. 5. The award was established in 2021 to honor a faculty member who has shown a lifelong commitment to education and demonstrates excellence in one or more domains of educational service, leadership or scholarship.

## **Maribeth Clifton, OTD, OTR/L 2022 Outstanding Staff Award**

Clifton received the 2022 Outstanding Staff Award from the Graduate Student Senate on April 14. The award honors staff members whose dedication and commitment to excellence in graduate training have made a significant contribution to the quality of life and professional development of graduate students at Washington University.

## **Robin Hattori, MA Gerry and Bob Virgil Ethic of Service Award**

Hattori received Washington University's Gerry and Bob Virgil Ethic of Service Award on April 19. The award is given annually to a select group of Washington University community members who exemplify a character of service and engagement with the St. Louis region.

## **Catherine Hoyt, PhD, OTD, OTR/L 2022 Recognition of Achievement Award**

Hoyt received the American Occupational Therapy Association's Recognition of Achievement Award on March 31. This award recognizes occupational therapy practitioners who have made notable contributions to the profession and its consumers in a focused area of occupational therapy practice.

## **Vicki Kaskutas, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA AOTA's Retired Educator's Commendation**

Kaskutas received the 2021 American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Retired Educator's Commendation. This commendation acknowledges exceptional leadership by retired occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant educators who have demonstrated commitment to the advancement of occupational therapy education. Kaskutas will retire as faculty on Oct. 1, 2022 after 26 years of service at Washington University.

## **Monica Perlmutter, OTD, OTR/L, SCLV, FAOTA 2022 Community of Light Award**

Perlmutter received the Community Light Award from the Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired on April 23 at their Visionary Gala. The award is presented to an individual or group whose accomplishments have made an immeasurable impact on the blind and visually impaired population.

## **Susy Stark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA 2022 Meritorious Service Award**

Stark received the 2022 American Occupational Therapy Foundation's (AOTF's) Meritorious Service Award on March 31. The award recognizes retiring and incumbent members of the AOTF Board of Trustees who have made sustained and exemplary contributions in support of the Foundation's mission. Stark served on the board from 2018 to 2021.

AVERY COLLIER



**Above: Robin Hattori, MA, 2022 Gerry and Bob Virgil Ethic of Service Awardee**

**Below: AOTF Board of Trustees Chair Mary Jane Mulcahey, PhD, OTR/L (right), presented Susy Stark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA (left), with the 2022 AOTF Meritorious Service Award.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOUNDATION



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# Named scholarship recipients

The following scholarship recipients were recognized at Commencement 2022.



If you would like to establish a named scholarship, please contact Lauren Walenga in University Advancement at 314-935-4225 or [walenga@wustl.edu](mailto:walenga@wustl.edu).

## Alumni Merit Scholarship

Oliver Grey Carnazzo, MSOT '22  
Cody Ward Dressler, MSOT '22  
Jesus Antonio Enriquez, MSOT '22  
Davis Eric André Holmes, MSOT '22  
Erick Julian Klein, MSOT '22

## Carolyn Baum Leadership Award

Breonna Lynn Woods, OTD '22

## Olive Bostrom Scholarship

Mikayla Cristine Mix, OTD '22

## Encompass Health Scholarship

Lindsay Elizabeth Curry, OTD '22  
Jacqueline Marie Hardy, MSOT '22  
Johanna Maria Hilpuesch, MSOT '22  
Dana Michelle Zavesky, OTD '22

## Excellence in Student Research Award

Ashley Marie Flynn, OTD '22  
Rachel Ya Whey Graves, OTD '22  
Kayleigh Marie Sukow, OTD '22  
Erin Elizabeth Tormey, OTD '22

## Ada Wells Ford Scholarship

Monica Quinn Prindiville, OTD '22  
Yea Ji Kim, MSOT '22  
Matthew Luis Silva, MSOT '22

## Carol Glauberman-Rock Scholarship

Haley Jo Brown, MSOT '22

## Martha Mae Lasche Scholarship

De'Lamor Aguilar, OTD '22  
Cordell Brian Houtchens, MSOT '22

## Alice Cinader Oyer Memorial Scholarship

Ashley Marie Flynn, OTD '22  
Daniel-Hannah Grace, OTD '22  
Clare Colleen Lassiter, OTD '22

## Agnes Fielding Prahman Scholarship

Olivia Lysette DePaul, OTD '22  
Grace Anne Franko, OTD '22  
Stephanie Judycki, OTD '22

## Pauline Cid Schultz Scholarship

Stephanie Judycki, OTD '22  
Delaney Brooke McIntyre, OTD '22  
Jacob Carleton Sturtevant, OTD '22  
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Zoey Rose Zeiger, MSOT '22

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The Commencement 2022 class speakers (left to right) Meagan Proffit, MSOT '22; Stephanie Judycki, OTD '22; and Chun Lun (Stephen) Lau, PhD '22. They were selected by their cohorts to represent their class.

# Future leader

## Rachel Graves, OTD/S '22

Hometown: Vancouver, WA

Undergraduate degree: BA in Kinesiology Sports Medicine and BA in Music from Rice University

Leadership: Vice President of Pi Theta Epsilon Xi Chapter



### What are your meaningful occupations?

I enjoy playing violin, hiking, cooking, exploring new places, listening to music, reading, learning languages, and spending time with family and friends.

### What is your definition of OT?

Occupational therapy (OT) is a holistic approach to helping people improve participation and satisfaction in their important and meaningful activities. Occupational therapists are uniquely skilled in activity analysis, which guides our reasoning to help clients across the lifespan.

### Why did you choose the OTD degree?

The opportunities to experience OT research with guided mentorship, learn about leadership and teaching, and develop a capstone experience that explores my personal interests made the OTD degree ideal for me. It allows me to learn about the intersection of clinical skills, research and teaching, which I hope to pursue further as I gain experience in the field.

### What are your career goals?

I am passionate about hand therapy, neurological rehabilitation, and injury treatment and prevention. I plan to work toward becoming a certified hand therapist in the next few years to enhance my clinical skills in treating complex upper extremity conditions. In addition, I am passionate about teaching and research. I hope to contribute to the OT profession as a clinician, researcher and educator to further our understanding of theory and evidence-based practice.

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

During my capstone experience this summer, I had the privilege of working virtually part-time with an occupational therapist and certified hand therapist who specializes in treating musicians. We collaboratively developed a new treatment tool and framework to guide clinicians who treat musicians and wrote a manuscript explaining its utility in practice. The opportunity to combine my love for injury treatment and prevention, musicians, research, and education was amazing. I am also incredibly grateful for everything I learned from WashU's OT theory and leadership courses and my OTD research mentor, Dr. Lisa Connor, who helped me publish research on community reintegration after stroke in the *Journal of Neuropsychological Rehabilitation*. All these experiences have helped me grow as an occupational therapist and have prepared me for future opportunities.

### Anything else you would like us to know?

I feel blessed to be joining the profession that helped me six years ago. I started my undergrad at Rice University as a violin performance major, and due to repetitive use injury, I experienced hand and occupational therapy for the first time as a freshman. As I recovered from my injury, I became passionate about helping others just as I had been helped. I was inspired by the holistic approach to improving individuals' participation in their meaningful occupations. Now I look forward to contributing to the profession and helping clients learn and adapt in the midst of challenges to ultimately find greater satisfaction in life. I am so thankful for the unwavering support of my family, friends and mentors who have contributed to my journey every step of the way.



# Congratulations, Class of 2022!

LJ PHOTOGRAPHY



**Master of Science in Occupational Therapy**



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**PhD in Rehabilitation and Participation Science**

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**Clinical Doctorate of Occupational Therapy**



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## Milliken Hand Rehabilitation Center turned 50



DOMINIQUE MACAIRE

Milliken Hand Rehabilitation Center celebrated its 50th year of helping hands in 2021. Founded as the John T. Milliken Hand Center in 1971, it was the first center of its kind in the Midwest, and only the third comprehensive hand center established in the United States. A private celebration for Milliken employees past and present was held on Oct. 17, 2021.