

PRE-OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

JMU Pre-professional Health Programs



GENERAL INFORMATION

Occupational therapy is skilled treatment that helps individuals achieve independence in all facets of their lives. It gives people the “skills for the job of living” necessary for independent and satisfying lives. Occupational therapy practitioners are skilled professionals whose education includes the study of human growth and development with special emphasis on the social, emotional and physiological effects of illness and injury. Occupational therapists (OTs) work in health and human service areas and have been members of a team delivering quality health care since 1917, when the profession was established. OTs work in hospitals (inpatient and outpatient programs), rehabilitation centers, early intervention programs, schools, mental health programs, home health care agencies, skilled nursing facilities, private practices, correctional facilities, shelters, community based programs or at universities or colleges as faculty.

As of 2007, all accredited occupational therapy programs are at the post-baccalaureate (master’s and doctoral) degree level. Currently, there are 150 colleges and universities that offer master’s-level educational programs in occupational therapy and 7 that offer doctoral-level programs. Further information on OT educational programs can be found at the **American Occupational Therapy Association** website (www.aota.org). The employment outlook for OTs is expected to remain very strong. According to the US Department of Labor, the employment for occupational therapists is expected to increase much faster than average for all areas of practice through 2014.

CHOOSING A MAJOR

Programs do not generally require a specific major. However, there are some majors that include many of the prerequisites commonly associated with occupational therapy programs. This will allow the student to reduce the number of courses that he/she is required to take in order to meet both the requirements of the major and the prerequisites of many OT programs. The admissions requirement information presented in this brochure should be used only as a guide when planning your pre-professional health curriculum. It is important that you do not interpret these guidelines as definitive statements regarding admission requirements or policies of individual OT programs. It is strongly recommended that students contact each respective occupational therapy program to which they may apply to understand specific course prerequisite and admissions criteria.

EARLY PLANNING IS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS

Students planning for a career in occupational therapy should discuss their goals with their pre-professional health and undergraduate advisers. It is important to begin this planning process when you begin your studies for a variety of reasons:

- You may be able to select courses that will meet requirements of your major and specific OT programs.
- You will need time to meet all requirements including hours of volunteer OT experience. Programs can require 40 to 100 hours of volunteer experience with occupational therapy professionals.
- Admission to OT programs is competitive. You should allow time to explore and plan for several options.
- Each OT program specifies its own requirements and procedures.

Potential applicants should make a concerted effort to identify which OT Program(s) are best suited to them. Students should seek advice early in their preparation through their assigned Pre-OT advisor.

PREREQUISITES

Occupational therapy programs have a set of prerequisite courses and experiences that may be unique to the particular program. Prerequisites generally include extensive undergraduate coursework in both the biological and behavioral sciences.

Prerequisite courses for the JMU Master of Occupational Therapy program are:

Applicants who HAVE completed an undergraduate degree

BIO 270 Human Physiology

MATH 220 Elementary Statistics

BIO 290 Human Anatomy

PSYC 160 Life Span Human Development

GANTH 195 Cultural Anthropology

PSYC 250 Abnormal Psychology

Choose one: **GSOCI 110** Social Issues in a Global Context *or* **GSOCI 140** Individual in Society

Choose one: **PHYS 140** College Physics I including laboratory **140L**, *or* **HTH 441/KIN 407** Rehab Biomechanics

Applicants who HAVE NOT completed an undergraduate degree

All courses listed above **plus**:

NUTR 280 Nutrition for Wellness
HTH 151 Foundations of Health Sciences
HTH 100 Personal Wellness

HTH 320 Health Statistic
HTH 354 US Health Care Systems
CHEM 120 Concepts of Chemistry

ACADEMIC RECORD

Academic performance is a critical criterion for evaluating applicants. Typically, programs review the overall Grade Point average (GPA) and the GPA from selected prerequisite courses. Many programs require a minimum GPA of applicants. They may also examine the applicant's transcript for evidence of academic consistency, course load and improvement in grade performance.

REQUIRED STANDARDIZED TEST

The vast majority of OT programs require the completion of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) as part of the prerequisite package. The JMU Occupational Therapy Program requires applicants to complete the verbal, quantitative, analytical and writing components of the GRE. Please refer to individual program requirements for additional tests that may be required. Information about the GRE is available at www.gre.org.

EVALUATION/RECOMMENDATION

All occupational therapy programs require letters of recommendation or evaluation. Students should establish relationships with faculty within the university as well as with employers in work place settings. References from a professor or health care professional are typically preferred over personal references.

PREPARATION TIMELINE

Most OT programs admit one group of students per year and starting dates vary. Some programs require that all prerequisites be completed at the time of application while others are satisfied when all prerequisites are finished by the time of enrollment. The application deadline for the JMU Occupational Therapy Program is January 1. Applications submitted by the due date are reviewed first and given earliest consideration for entry into the program. Applications received after February 1 will be considered as enrollment permits.

JMU's MASTER OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM

JMU's Master's of Occupational Therapy (MOT) Program was initiated in June 2005. Information on this two and one-half year program can be found at: www.healthsci.jmu.edu/occupationaltherapy/

MEETING WITH A PRE-OT ADVISOR

Dr. Jeanne Wenos is the **Pre-Occupational Therapy Program Coordinator** (wenosjz@jmu.edu, HHS 3115, 540-568-2841).

The Pre-OT Society is a JMU student organization for those interested in occupational therapy. The JMU Virginia Epsilon chapter of Alpha Epsilon Delta (Health Pre-professional Honor Society) also welcomes students to their meetings and encourages students to become members.

Note: Students planning professional health careers should discuss these goals with their pre-professional health program and undergraduate major advisors. It is important to begin this planning process when students' studies are initiated; it is imperative that students plan career options. The admissions requirement information presented above should be used only as a guide when planning students' pre-professional health curriculum. It is important that students do not interpret these guidelines as definitive statements regarding the admission requirements or policies of the individual schools and colleges of professional health. Each institution specifies its own requirements and procedures. It is essential that students become familiar with these requirements and make appropriate course selections in consultation with their pre-professional health and academic advisors. Absolute admission requirements are limited to provide necessary flexibility in the undergraduate program. The course requirements for most professional health programs are similar and usually specify minimum credit in biology, chemistry and physics. Schools of professional health recognize the desirability of students having a variety of interests and diverse backgrounds. Applicants are urged to obtain a broad cultural background in such fields as literature, social science, psychology and the fine arts.

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