A NEW SEMESTER AND A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR!

Hopefully we are all refreshed and ready to take on the challenges of a new academic year. Thank you to everyone who have helped get some of our non-standard students across the line over the vacation period. We have really appreciated your input.

New cohorts of undergraduate and MOT students arrived in the first week of March, ready and raring to go, and the academic staff now have the difficult task of remembering everyone’s names! We have had a sustained demand for both the Occupational programs with the ATAR cut-off for the Bachelor program remaining high at 93.4 in 2014, and increased competition for the MOT program this year.

PROGRAM NEWS

Looking after international students
Across both programs we now have 88 international students (56 in the MOT program and 32 in the UG program). 64 are female and 23 are male, and come from a variety of countries: Canada, USA, Malaysia, Nigeria, Hong Kong, China, Singapore & Japan.

We have a student liaison officer appointed from the OT academic staff to assist and provide support to these students, and the Work Integrated Learning Team have been liaising with the Dean for International to provide extra support and input for any of these students having difficulty with English.

We have also implemented barrier tasks during one unit of study in first year (first semester) for each of the programs, to identify students who have difficulties with listening, understanding and writing English. These students then have to complete a learning program before being allocated a placement in first year.

We are also working to encourage the international students to engage in the mentoring programs available within the Faculty.
Program news cont’d

Involving consumers in the programs
We were successful in obtaining Faculty funding to integrate and renumerate consumers into both the undergraduate and MOT programs. This has been long overdue as arrangements had been very informal up until recently. As part of this initiative we will be evaluating the effect on students’ learning of being able to interact with consumers, and OT has been invited to host a Faculty Forum on the topic at the end of May. We will soon have two consumer representatives on the External Advisory Committee as well.

Development of elective units
We have been able to offer a range of electives at post graduate and undergraduate levels for students in semester one of 2014:

OCCP5187 Falls prevention with older people (on-line)
OCCP5235 Stroke rehabilitation (on-line & blended)
OCCP5248 People with an intellectual disability (on campus & fieldwork)
OCCP5246 Practice in workplace injury and rehab (on campus)
OCCP5247 Mental health interventions (on campus)
OCCP5250 OT in Hand and Upper Limb Rehabilitation (on campus)
OCCP5245 OT in Learning & Co-ord Difficulties (on campus)

It is possible for OTs to undertake any of these units as a non-award student.

This is one opportunity for anyone who is interested in a CPD opportunity, or an OT interested in looking at another area of practice, or a part-time clinician.

We estimate the costs would be approximately $2875 for a 13 week program, and completion of these units may be credited towards other postgraduate study in the future. Applications need to be made by October 31st in the year prior the electives being offered.

It is also possible for a non-award student to undertake a supervised project through a single unit, such as OCCP5249 Professional Elective. This may help get some research started in your workplace.

Contact Lynette Mackenzie for further information on Lynette.Mackenzie@sydney.edu.au

SPOTLIGHT ON

Michelle Villeneuve, PhD (Education), MSc (Rehab Science), BSc (OT)

Michelle joined the OT Discipline in July, 2013. Michelle came to us from the Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. She moved to Australia with her daughter, narrowly escaping the longest and coldest winter that Canadians have experienced in decades. Needless to say, Michelle and Ella are enjoying the climate and the out-of-doors lifestyle that Sydney offers.

What is your current role?
I am a Lecturer on the Master of Occupational Therapy and the Undergraduate Occupational Therapy programs. I teach into the community development units, program evaluation, and clinical and professional reasoning. I conduct research on collaborating for inclusion of young children with developmental delays and disabilities at school and in the community. I am also involved in disability inclusive development projects internationally.

My first job was…
I put myself through Uni by working as a residential support staff caring for youth with dual diagnosis in a group home setting (Canada). When I graduated from the University of Toronto as an occupational therapist, I continued to focus on young children with developmental delays and disabilities, providing services in a range of community settings including rural communities, mid-sized cities, and major metropolitan centres. A big part of my journey as an occupational therapist has involved community development roles in Canada and international contexts. These roles have emphasized disability inclusive development and community based rehabilitation. I have travelled through these roles first as a practicing therapist, then as an educator, and more recently as a researcher.

My biggest achievement so far…
…is, without a doubt, my daughter! Observing her transition from Canada to Australia with grace and poise makes me feel terrific about our decision to migrate to Australia. Professionally, I’m pleased with my contributions to the introduction of occupational therapy in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war and continued development of OT in that country through the work of my students.

I work at the University because…
My vision is to support inclusion of young children with developmental delays and disabilities in home, schools, and community contexts. I am dedicated to supporting occupational therapy students to develop their competencies for collaborative practice using effective methods for cross-sector service coordination and interprofessional collaboration – which always includes families as key members of the team.

For more information http://sydney.edu.au/health-sciences/about/people/profiles/michelle.villeneuve.php

Follow me on Twitter: Michelle.Villeneuve@Research C4I
We are in the process of developing clinical simulation as part of some units of study with integrated fieldwork components. This will allow students to develop their clinical skills prior to fieldwork experiences and will account for a week (40 hours) of the clinical hours they need to achieve as part of the OT programs.

We are submitting a proposal to adapt one MOT unit in semester two of 2014, and one undergraduate unit in semester one of 2015. It will involve students working through the occupational therapy process with client actors, and being supervised by academic and hopefully a clinical educator as well. If the proposal is funded this will go ahead for OCCP5238, which will have a placement at the end of 2014. This will make MOT students much better prepared for their placements and ready to hit the ground running!

Fingers crossed this will be funded by the Faculty!!

The Cumberland campus now has a fully functioning “ward” as part of the new Clinical Simulation space. In addition to the OT ADL suite we now have in the redeveloped Annex building we have the capacity to run some very realistic simulation activities using client actors prior to students coming out on

**OT USYD @ THE NSW/ACT CONFERENCE IN MARCH**

Thanks to the generosity of Invacare, two OT students were sponsored to attend the NSW/ACT conference. These are their reflections of their experience:

**Mei Xue Wong (Undergraduate Honours)**

The conference was an eye-opening experience for me. There were so many research projects of various topics being presented, and it was exciting to see how the findings were going to take OT practice to the next level. Many presenters highlighted the importance of client-centred practice and meaningful occupational participation to address the varying needs of different clients. Another interesting point mentioned was how the career path of OT is an exciting one. Many jobs out there do not specifically request for Occupational Therapists, but are highly suited for OT involvement. This was exemplified through one of the keynote speakers, Jordan O’Reilly, an entrepreneur and OT graduate who set up a not-for-profit organization to create opportunities for young adults with significant disabilities in employment and social aspects. Knowing that the role of OT is so diverse, it will definitely be interesting to see how OT evolves as a profession over time.

**Callum Gregory (MOT)**

The OT Conference NSW 2014 was a wonderful showcase of current research and innovation combined with a theme of OT practice over the lifespan. The presentations were well constructed and expertly delivered. It was fantastic to see last year’s students presenting what they’ve learned through their research. Discussions regarding the management of different generations, the use of technology in therapy and the consideration of men as a minority health group were particularly interesting. Overall the two days of workshops were well presented, the food was amazing and the free (that's right, FREE) barista coffee was welcome!

Apart from the presenters and chair people from USyd we were also well represented by student volunteers at the conference who were very enthusiastic and professional – well done to: Jennifer Armas, Aleksandra Babic, Mostafa Bukhmseen, Shing Ha Cheung, Huibing Goh, Alyssa Khor, Amy Stuchfield, Brianna Lam, Jamie Tse, Michelle Lauchlan, Subahari Ravindran & Tamara Zakarian.
Farewell to: Franca Coniglio

It is with great sadness that we bid farewell for Franca who has been a fabulous addition to our programs over the past few years. Franca is going to concentrate on her clinical work and PhD studies and will be finishing at the end of this semester.

Study leave

A/Prof Lynette Mackenzie will be away for second semester for a period of Study leave. She will be going to Brunel University in London (UK) for 4 months to undertake some joint research with Dr. Anne McIntyre, another falls prevention researcher. She will also be working at the University of Malaya for two months in Kuala Lumpur to work on two falls prevention projects with Professor Maw Pin Tan (a geriatrician), as well as developing further occupational therapy projects in breast cancer with Dr. Siew Yim Loh.

Kylie Wales
PhD Topic:
Measuring function and cost effectiveness in occupational therapy home discharge planning
Why did you decide to start your PhD?:
After I had finished my honours I always knew that I would return to do further research. I always wanted to explore research further and to have the opportunity to teach in occupational therapy. A PhD opened these doors for me. I was working clinically when I received a telephone call with a PhD opportunity. Not only was the opportunity in a field I wanted to research in but it was with a research team that I wanted to learn from.
What would you say to people considering a PhD?:
Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to make a decision. There is a level of commitment that has to be made not only by the PhD student but your family and friends. A PhD is a very rewarding journey.
Where will a PhD take you?:
My PhD has already allowed me to achieve my immediate goals of teaching and I would like to further develop my skills in this area. I have always wanted to integrate research further into clinical practice. The skills I have learnt from my PhD will allow me to further develop as an evidence based clinician (that can hopefully do some research on the side!)

Jacki Wesson
PhD Topic:
Why did you decide to start a PhD?
An opportunity came my way to be involved in some research. I enjoyed the process and thought it a wonderful chance to take a break from clinical work and try and figure out what is the best way for OTs to conduct clinical assessment of older people for functional impairment that may be due to cognition.
What would you say to people considering a PhD?
We need more OTs to do PhDs so as to strengthen our evidence base and standing with our professional colleagues. In a way it has helped me ‘grow up’ as a professional. And the hardest decision is just saying yes. Once you’ve done that – it’s still hard but things do fall into place.
Where will a PhD take you?
That’s a good question. Continuing to work as a clinician and as a researcher are the things I’d like to combine.