GRADUATION 2015

March 13th saw the graduation of 55 undergraduate OT students and 57 MOTs, many of whom already in the workforce as occupational therapy practitioners. We wish them well and hope to see some of them return to engage in graduate study in the future. Needless to say, we were proud of them all. Our very own Dr. Anne Honey (left) carried the University Mace during the ceremony.

Included in this graduation were nine honours students (below) with Honours Program Directors Drs. Anne Honey and Meryl Lovarini. All graduated with Class 1 or Class 2, Level 1 Honours and researched diverse topics from falls prevention for people with dementia to mentorship programs in men’s sheds. A couple have already submitted their manuscripts to peer-reviewed journals, and hopefully we will see them in print soon!
STAFF-STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Setting the Scene for future OTs

On Tuesday 13th January 2015, Year 11 and Year 12 Indigenous Students from around Australia participated in a session run by some of our staff to learn about Occupational Therapy. The session formed part of the Wingara Mura – Bunga Barrabugu Summer Program where Indigenous school students come and to stay at The University of Sydney and get a taste of university life.

During the session, students got to learn about what Occupational Therapists do, who they work with and where they might work. Activities also included some ‘hands-on’ activities modelled on OT practice such as using a wheelchair, making a sandwich without the use of their dominant arm and using dressing equipment. In the afternoon the students participated in a simulation session – observing an occupational therapist working with a client (actor) in a real life scenario. Students gave feedback after attending all the health science sessions that the occupational therapy session was one of their favourites. Let’s hope we see some of the students enrolled in occupational therapy courses after they finish school!

‘The Great 4th Year OT Bake Off!’

The 4th Year OTs celebrated the return to their final year of university with a morning tea. In the theme of ‘The Great British Bake Off’, students brought in their baked goods for judging. There were many wonderful, colorful, imaginative and yummy creations! Anita Bundy and Anne Honey had the gratifying privilege of sampling all the goodies in their judging roles. Congratulations to the winner, Liz Trotter, for her Hazelnut Torte. But special mention was made of the cake design which promoted our OT aims of client independence with a royal fondant scooter, over toilet aide and bath board! It was a great way to start the year off together, and the entire staff wish you the very best in your final year of study!
PARTNERS IN LEARNING: CURRICULUM INITIATIVES

The OT curricula constantly undergo evaluation and modification based on feedback from students, therapists and consumers. Three curriculum initiatives which utilise partnerships with consumers of occupational therapy and therapists have become part of the UG and MOT curricula and are proving to be a hit with students and learning partners alike.

**OCCP 5235 Stroke Rehabilitation: Dr. Annie McCluskey (Co-ordinator)**

This fully online elective is limited to 30 students from OT and other disciplines. Students work with a volunteer stroke survivor at home, in groups of 2-3 on client-nominated goals. The unit coordinator recruits interested stroke survivors through Sydney rehabilitation services. They may or may not be receiving allied health services. Some people have had their stroke 4-5 years earlier, while others had their stroke more recently.

Students identify three priority activities that the person needs to, wants to or is expected to complete, and which become the focus of the therapy program. GAS is used to document three goals. If a person has limited communication, the interview is conducted with the person and their carer. The students document an intervention plan, after consultation with teaching staff, and administer baseline outcome measures related to the activity. Goals may focus on self-care activities, fitness and increased activity outdoors, getting in and out of bed, using cutlery, writing or making phone calls unassisted.

At least one session is conducted by distance or tele-rehabilitation using Skype or FaceTime, and often need to teach the stroke survivor how to use the technology, and trouble shoot, before the session can occur. At the end of 8-10 consultations, they provide the stroke survivor with a portfolio of measures, goals, and their intervention, along with relevant resources and photographs. Feedback from students [as well as stroke survivors] has been very positive:

“Hands-on experience with a client, including service provision, initial interview definitely helped in developing personal qualities as a graduate in the area of stroke rehab”.

**OCCP5239 - Community Based Occupational Therapy: Dr. Meryl Lovarini (Co-ordintor)**

Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) students in their second year, have the opportunity to work in partnership with a community organisation as part of their enrolment in OCCP5239 - Community Based Occupational Therapy (OT) Fieldwork. The aim of this unit of study is to give students an opportunity to develop skills and competency in community project management in a variety of different contexts appropriate for OT practice.

Students work in small groups to develop and implement a structured self-directed fieldwork project. Each project is developed in consultation with their community partner while OT supervision for the project is provided by an OT Academic at The University of Sydney. This semester, the students are working on 20 projects with 13 community partners. Our community partners are diverse, including organisations from the private, not-for-profit, public health, disability and educational sectors. Client groups include babies, toddlers, preschoolers, primary school aged children, high school students, young adults with disabilities, adults with mental health conditions intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injury or Huntington’s disease and older people with dementia and their families. Current projects are focusing on program development, clinic development, program evaluation and the development of resources to meet the needs of the community organisation.

Participation in this unit of study enables students to demonstrate their project management skills, achieve a negotiated outcome with their community partner using key professional skills needed by OTs today and in the future. We thank our community partners for providing this learning opportunity for our MOT students. If you have any questions about this unit of study please contact Dr. Meryl Lovarini, Unit of Study Coordinator at meryl.lovarini@sydney.edu.au.
A BRIDGE BETWEEN CURRICULUM AND FIELDWORK: SIMULATED LEARNING

If competence with clinical reasoning develops with experience, how can we develop such competence in our students? This was the question that prompted development of a new Unit of Study in the UG and MOT programs which is based on using simulated learning.

The rationale underpinning this unit is that development of competence in clinical reasoning is partly based on developing skills for reflective practice. When we reflect on what we do and why we do it, we develop our understanding and can use these new insights to improve our effectiveness as evidence informed, client-centered occupational therapy practitioners. While fieldwork placements provide this opportunity, another recent advance in occupational therapy education has been the introduction of simulation as an alternative to, or to replace part or all of a fieldwork placement. Based on the Health Workforce Australia funded project completed by Rodger, Bennett, Fitzgerald, Neads in 2010, up to 200 of the 1000 hours required by World Federation of Occupational Therapy can be met through the use of simulated learning activities.

Here at the University of Sydney, simulated learning has been implemented in both the Master of Occupational Therapy and the Bachelor of Applied Science (Occupational Therapy) programs. The simulation involves MOT students in the second semester of first year, and undergraduate students in the first semester of their second year. For both programmes, simulated learning has replaced 1 week of the undergraduate Professional Practice 2 (2 week) placement, and the MOT Fieldwork 2 (3 week) placement. Our aim of introducing simulation in the early part of both programmes is to capitalise on theory to practice learning to assist students to develop increased competence (and confidence) in clinical reasoning through critical reflection. In addition, students focus on improving their communication and rapport building skills along with their observation and interpretation skills. Our aim is that these students apply what they have learned from their simulation experience into their placement with a stronger foundation. The expectation is that fieldwork supervisors might be able to provide students with more ‘hands-on’ experiences earlier in the placement than might otherwise have happened. Students complete three sessions with one client, and two with another. Time between sessions allow students the opportunity to reflect on their performance and adjust what they do in subsequent sessions. For more information, please contact Merrolee Penman, WIL OT Academic at merrolee.penman@sydney.edu.au


USYD OT INNOVATION: A NEW APP

The PIEL (Participation In Everyday Life) Survey app is a free, easy to use and accessible app developed by researchers in Occupational Therapy at the Faculty of Health Sciences. It transforms an iDevice into an offline, portable survey tool. It was originally developed as a tool for research, particularly using the Experience Sampling Method but now has much wider application including learning what clients do every day and how they feel about those occupations. The PIEL Survey app can be used for a single survey or can be programmed to run the same survey multiple times over a prescribed number of days or weeks. It has its own library of reminder alert sounds. A variety of question types can be programmed into the surveys. These include sliders (visual analogue scales), free text, single and multiple response questions. The PIEL Survey app has been designed to utilise the accessibility features of iDevices, including voiceover, which converts text to speech.

Download the PIEL Survey app from the App store.

For more information visit http://pielsurvey.org/
A great start to 2015 for the following USYD OT staff who received funding to support their research. Congratulations to all.

**Who:** Gwynnyth Llewellyn & Michelle Villeneuve from the Faculty of Health Sciences, Dale Dominey-Howes and Filippo Dall’osso from the Natural Hazards Research Group.

**Project:** *Disability Inclusive Disaster Preparedness in NSW: Enabling community resilience through collaboration* (2015 – 2017) ($321,480.00)

The focus is on developing disability inclusive disaster preparedness in three regions of NSW, and the development of tools for individual and organizational self-assessment of capacity to support disability inclusive disaster planning.

**Funder:** Community Resilience Innovation Program (CRIP), Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, NSW

**Who:** Nicola Hancock, Justin Scanlan, Anne Honey, Anita Bundy

**Project:** Recovery i-Connect.

The focus is to develop an internet resource to support individuals living with mental illness to monitor their own recovery and support collaborative goal setting.

**Funder:** Inner West Partners in Recovery Innovation Fund

**Who:** Nicola Hancock, Anne Honey, Justin Scanlan

**Project:** Consumer-led evaluation of Northern Beaches Partners in Recovery program.

The focus is on supporting a team of consumer researchers to develop and implement a consumer-led evaluation of the Northern Beaches Partners in Recovery program.

**Funder:** Northern Beaches Partners in Recovery evaluation fund

**Who:** Sanet DuToit and international collaborators.

**Project:** Global initiative promoting meaningful engagement of people with advanced dementia ageing in supported living environment. ($17,000)

**Funder:** Worldwide Universities Network (WUN).

The Discipline of Occupational Therapy at USYD looks forward to furthering research and clinical collaborations with all aspects of the profession in 2015 and to offer continuing updates on staff and student activities through quarterly newsletters.

If you have contributions or comments, please contact Chris Chapparo at chris.chapparo@sydney.edu.au