Fieldwork is an essential part of occupational therapy education. To acknowledge its uniqueness and complexity, the AOTA has set it apart as a separate section, Section C, of the ACOTE standards. The challenge of meeting these standards requires every accredited department of occupational therapy to have a designated Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC) in a full-time, 12 month position on the faculty. Over the past 20 years, we have been fortunate beyond words to have had two of the most dedicated and hardworking directors of fieldwork imaginable, Ms. Sandy Cash, who retired in 2008 after 24 years of service at VCU, and Ms. Jayne Shepherd, who has been in the position ever since. Both are VCU OT alums; both can boast long and successful careers in occupational therapy, most of it as VCU faculty members.

In addition to our Director of Fieldwork, Jayne Shepherd, Dr. Carole Ivey serves as assistant director of fieldwork, in charge of fieldwork I experiences. Many of you know Jayne and Carole well and speak with them often. At times, they serve as a sort of lifeline to fieldwork students and fieldwork educators who need to work out challenging situations and set individual learning objectives for Fieldwork I & II experiences. Regularly throughout the year, the director of fieldwork meets in person and via teleconference with fieldwork educators at the Virginia Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Council (VOTFWC) meetings and contacts you to make requests for fieldwork placement. With increases in OT enrollment across the country and additional programs in Virginia, we are reminded of the value of the relationships we have built between VCU OT and the community of OT practitioners. We are grateful each time a fieldwork site says yes to accepting one of our students for a FW I or FW II experience. My letter is in tribute to the many fieldwork educators and supervisors that serve our students every year.

Preparing fieldwork educators is the responsibility of academic programs, and we are fortunate that so many occupational therapists and the healthcare facilities they work in recognize how vital it is to the profession to assist us with training our students. We are especially grateful to the many occupational therapists who accept the responsibility for training fieldwork educators and coordinating OT fieldwork for their work settings. Within the borders of Richmond City, among the many fieldwork supervisors we are grateful to, I would like to offer special thanks to Lauren Carter-Smith who has co-taught in the Fieldwork Educators Certificate Program with Jayne Shepherd, and Laura Evans who has made the HCA Chippenham Hospital’s board room and teleconference technology available for the Virginia Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Council meetings for several years. We are also grateful to ALL of you for your ongoing commitment to serving our students. There are so many individuals and facilities deserving of personal recognition; I wish I could mention them all.

In this climate of high productivity demands for OT practitioners and budget cuts, fieldwork educators still manage to provide outstanding training for students in FW I & II experiences while maintaining full caseloads. They assist fieldwork students to learn facility-specific documentation processes, give reports in meetings, and oversee dozens of evaluations and interventions carried out by students. FW educators meet regularly with students to provide necessary feedback on performance, discuss concerns, and provide ongoing support. They provide timely communication with Jayne and Carole throughout the fieldwork experience, and must complete and submit student evaluations regularly. Most importantly, fieldwork educators are experts at building positive relationships between themselves and their students. To all fieldwork educators and coordinators working with VCU students, I extend my sincere thanks. I assure you that, when FW Is and IIs
are complete, our students provide feedback on the outstanding guidance and support you have given. I hope there are rewards and satisfaction from knowing that you have made a substantial contribution toward students’ career development.

If you are interested in learning more about the VOTFWC, please contact our office at 804-828-2219 or Laura Evans at Laura.Evans@hcahealthcare.com. If you would like to become a fieldwork site for VCU OT, please see our website at http://www.sahp.vcu.edu/occu/ for more information. We are ALWAYS looking for new sites to offer our students in and outside of Virginia. This year we have students as far away as California and Hawaii!

Al Copolillo, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA
Associate Professor and Chair

International Extravaganza!

VCU OT in India

Teaching *Sensory Integration Perspectives*, the first course in the sensory integration certification program, Dr. Shelly Lane has had incredible opportunities to travel to other countries. Last year she taught this course in Johannesburg, South Africa and a sensory integration introduction course in both Sydney and Melbourne, Australia. This year’s travels took her to Delhi, India where about 50 occupational and physical therapists took the course. The *Perspectives* course, for those of you who may not know, requires about 40 hours of face to face lecture and lab time, all provided in a 5 day sequence; exhausting to teach and perhaps more so to sit and listen for that long! Shelly found the therapists from India to be highly motivated, very interactive, and driven to learn everything they could. The *Perspectives* course is heavy on neuroscience, so it requires real fortitude to sit and process for an entire work week!

Because Shelly is so passionate about neuroscience, particularly its application to practice, course evaluations tend to be very strong. In fact, several students made comments such as “loved and enjoyed neuroscience section”, noting that the material helped them understand connections between brain and behavior. Shelly’s teaching approach is greatly appreciated, and she is noted for her ability to break down complex concepts, making them more readily understood. Courses such as these give Shelly the opportunity to talk about our programs at VCU as well, and potentially to recruit interested therapists for advanced degrees.

In addition to the course, Shelly and her family visited mosques, temples, shrines and parks in Delhi, traveled to Agra to see the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort, and went to Jaipur, where they visited sites such as Jantar Mantar (an ancient observatory filled with sun dials that were used to chart the sun’s course through the zodiac), the Pink City, and the Temple of the Sun God. Balancing work and play is what OT is all about!

The picture here is the class at completion of the 5 day course. Shelly is somewhere in the crowd!
AKWABAA! WOEZO! These Ghanaian words of welcome embody the experience of a recent OT Department adventure. During the first two weeks of June of this year, Stacey Reynolds, Ph.D., OTR/L, Assistant Professor, served as fearless leader to a team of faculty and practitioners who travelled together to Ghana. The mission was to begin to establish or re-establish relationships with schools and organizations so that students could potentially study and get field experience abroad, and to “train” others to help co-lead the course in the future. Accompanying Stacey on the trip were Dr. Shelly Lane (VCU Professor of OT), Dr. Rick Thornton (physical therapist and Adjunct OT Professor), Dr. Carole Ivey (VCU Assistant Professor of OT), Dr. Jodi Teitelman (psychologist and VCU Associate Professor), and Kacie Hopkins, M.S., OTR/L, a VCU alum and OT at Children’s Hospital in Richmond. The exploratory trip was generously supported through a grant provided through VCU’s Global Education Office.

The team visited five centers which were either orphanages, children’s homes or foster homes: Osu Children’s Home (Accra Region), Nyama Dua foster homes (Teshie, Accra Region), Children’s Home of Hope (Cape Coast) and Eugemot Orphanage (Hohoe, Volta Region). Visits were also made to New Horizons School (Accra) and Gbi School for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (Hohoe). As part of ongoing work with Global Sovereign Mission, the team also helped out at Grace International School in Adotelman and the CMB program for “street kids.” At most of these sites, the team illustrated the potential value of OT and PT by conducting developmental screenings and discussing teacher and caregiver training ideas (e.g., ergonomics, seating and positioning, sensory issues, transfers, goal writing, fine motor and problem solving skills for children who do not have opportunities for manipulative play). Each site also received donations of shoes, book bags, and medical and school supplies.

Everyone on the team was delighted by the warmth and graciousness of their Ghanaian hosts at each site, including Reverend Eric Annan and Felicia Annan at Sovereign Global Mission; John, Paul, Muna and Joe of the Eban Project; Mama Eugenia Kahu at Eugemot Orphanage; and Vanessa and Jocelyn at New Horizons School. The children left an indelible imprint on everyone’s hearts and delighted the team with their affectionate and playful natures, even when living with disabilities and/or in challenging circumstances. The team also agreed that Vincent, who carried everyone safely to and fro throughout the journey was the Best Driver Ever.

The study abroad course that will be developed as a result of this trip is tentatively scheduled to take place during the last two weeks of May, 2014. Please direct any inquiries to Stacey at reynoldsse3@vcu.edu.
The Ghana Team hard at work!

VCU OT in Ecuador

This past Fall, Carolyn Queck (M.S., 2009) travelled with two friends to visit orphanages in Ecuador, with the ultimate dream of starting their own in mind. They visited several orphanages in Cuenca and Quito, and volunteered for a week at one site in Cuenca. Carolyn’s roles involved talking to tias (aunties and caregivers) about any known disabilities of the children and services they might be receiving, and providing a developmental checklist with age-appropriate gross and fine motor skills norms. They then travelled to Santa Ana, a remote village in the jungle. Although their primary mission was to assess the water system there, Carolyn also got a chance to consult with local pre-school teachers about use of the developmental checklist and strategies for improving children’s motor skills. They also had fun distributing toothbrushes to the kids and teaching them to brush, as well as completing a craft activity that provided the children with a great deal of sensory input and opportunities for fine motor play with items that were typically available in the village. Carolyn noted that, of the several orphanages visited, only one was providing OT, PT and speech therapy to children with disabilities. Her next step is to learn to speak Spanish so she can communicate more directly and specifically with the tias when she returns.
Emily Belyea (M.S., 2013) and Fiona Bessey-Bushnell (M.S., 2001) both appeared in the Spring, 2013 edition of the VCU Allied Health Alumni Magazine. Fiona was quoted as appreciating many aspects of being an occupational therapist, including “the diversity of practice areas, the many opportunities in this expanding market and the main tenets of the profession”.

Meg Cook (OTD, 2010) is currently the Assistant Dean of the OTA Program at Northern Virginia Community College which entered its first class of 15 students earlier this year. In February, 2013 they co-sponsored the AOTA Fieldwork Educators Certificate Program with Fairfax County Public Schools, a course taught by Lauren Carter-Smith of Sheltering Arms and VCU’s Jayne Shepherd.

The Kathryn Lawrence Dragas (M.S., 2001) Memorial Scholarship was featured in the Winter, 2013 of the VCU Power of Personal Philanthropy publication. The scholarship, established by classmates Fiona Bessey-Bushnell, Cassie Lorie and Selena Isabelle, and Kathryn’s husband, William Dragas, offers support to students interested in working in pediatrics and helped fund the Department’s Sensory Processing and Stress Evaluation Laboratory.

Jane Ford (RPI, 1946) remains incredibly busy volunteering in a number of capacities at Lakewood Manor in Richmond, VA. On June 20, 2014, several faculty were treated to a resident production of Beach Haven, an original effort of the Manor Players, for which Jane used her artistic talents for Set Design and Artwork.

Jessica Lynn’s (M.S., 2011) career as a pediatrics OT was featured in the March 1, 2013 Medical Careers supplement to the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Jessica talked about the creativity and need for adaptability inherent in OT as a career choice and noted that one of the most rewarding aspects of her job was “being able to see kids with difficulties in a particular area complete tasks that they never thought they’d be able to do, with smiles on their faces. Another great aspect of the job is being able to work with many other disciplines…to help the child achieve their personal goals.”

Cynthia Normandia (OTD, 2010) returned to the Ukraine this summer to organize the Third International Conference for Children with Disabilities in Kiev. Her travels also included developing collaborative teams of OTs, PTs, speech therapists and special education teachers to assist with conference development and to provide direct training to caregivers at orphanages in Znamenka and Romanov.

Elizabeth Brown Snyder (M.S., 1991) lives in Beaufort, SC and is working in home health occupational therapy.

Megan S. Stratton (M.S., 2006) works at Children’s Hospital in Richmond, VA and proudly began supervising VCU fieldwork students last year!

The M.S.O.T. CLASS OF 2013:

When asked in January of this year about their future intentions and plans, these graduates reported snagging the following jobs:

- Nicole Baeza – Henrico Health and Rehab
- Jessica Brown – Johns Hopkins Hospital in acute care
- Cindy Bruce -- VTCC
- Dierra Bradford and Erin Laffoon – Hopewell Healthcare
- Nicole Daddio – Early Intervention in Colorado
- Courtney English – Children’s Hospital at VCU in Richmond and Petersburg Therapy Center
- Chelsey Hall – Full-time at Westport Rehab and PRN at Integrated Therapy Services
- Cody Larue – HealthSouth in Petersburg
- Christina Mason – Health South, Petersburg (where she plans on “being happy”)
- Mary Hart MacLeod – Fairfax Co. Schools
- Kaitlin Myers – VCU Health Systems on inpatient rehab unit
- Sarah Sutton – Medical Facilities of America in Hanover
- Dorothy Watson – Health South in inpatient rehab
Others hadn’t finalized their plans but knew where they wanted to go geographically and/or their desired areas of practice:

Amanda Arick – pediatrics
Mike Austin -- SNF
Tiarra Baskerville – Richmond
Melissa Bray -- Fairfax
Katelyn Carluzzo – Northern Virginia; peds or adults
Leah Eichholz – New York City; pediatrics
Grace Golojuch – peds private practice
Cara King – hand therapy
Amanda Evans Martin – Washington (state)
Lana McGowan – Orlando, FL; outpatient or acute care
Meghan Suntich – North Carolina
Brittany Van Zanten – Baltimore, MD
James Wilkerson – SNF

A common response was “get a job” (with many exclamation points and smiley faces) – Theresa

Franceschi, Shelley Jewell, Nikki Kardouni, Sarah Rosendale – with Katherine Duncan and Sarah Rosendale mentioning first passing their certifying exam, and Sarah R. and Kasey Underdown reporting that they’d travel beforehand.

Responses defying categorization but also truly summing up the spirit of an anticipated good life were as follows:

Jenny Bonano – My plans are to go with the flow and see what happens
Candice Canody – To be the great OT I’ve been trained to be
Ryan Davis – Start job, pass exam, become a confident OT, plan for an amazing vacation next year!
Matt Huddle – 1-2 kids, home, career, satisfying life

If there are errors, omissions or updates, please contact us at jlteitel@vcu.edu, so we can make you “famous” with accuracy in our next newsletter edition!

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We Remember…

William T. Miller, Jr. died on September 4, 2012 at age 80. After serving in the Army in the Korean and Cold Wars, “Bill” earned his B.S. in Occupational Therapy at RPI. He worked at Beth Shalom Home, the McGuire V.A. Hospital and the Hampton V.A. Hospital. He then competed a Master’s degree at RPI, eventually leading to a position as Coordinator of Rehabilitation Medicine at McGuire. Because of his supervision of VCU students, he was also an affiliate of the (then) Medical College of Virginia until his retirement in 1989. His leadership and service will be greatly missed.
It hasn’t taken long for Sheri Michel, after earning her M.S (2001) and OTD (2008) degrees at VCU, to emerge as a true leader in the practice of occupational therapy. Sheri’s vision and passion were formally recognized when she received the Department of the Army’s Occupational Therapist of the Year award for the Southern Regional Medical Command and the Warrior Care and Transition Program Award for Excellence.

To put this in context, it should be noted that Sheri moved to San Antonio, TX shortly after graduation to take on the position of Battalion Occupational Therapist with the Army’s Warrior Transition Battalion at Brooke Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston. In that capacity, she developed and implemented the Warrior in Transition Advancement Program. Her model, consisting of 13 Life Skills classes on cognitive and behavioral assessment and intervention, and conducted in collaboration with the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Performance and Resilience Enhancement Program, has been recommended for replication throughout the service. She was also responsible for significantly expanding a small Work Study Program for wounded service members into a well-organized, frequently-requested, and highly successful work transition and adjustment program. She has presented on these programs at national conferences aimed at both therapist and military audiences.

Additional programs in which she has been the leader include the Comprehensive Transition Plan (implementing goal-setting), Non-Medical Attendant program (consulting/assessment in ADL), and Animal-Assisted Therapy, in collaboration with OTD students at the AMEDD Center and School. She has been involved with ensuring Americans with Disabilities Act compliance for military and civilian housing, and in the Army’s Computer Assisted Program, administering assistive technology assessments. From 2008-10, Sheri was a member of the Brooke Army Medical Center’s Complementary and Alternative Medicine Research Advisory Board. Currently, she serves as Adjunct Faculty for Army-Baylor University at the U. S. Army Medical Department Center and Schools.

The letters of recommendation supporting Sheri’s nomination attest to both her zeal and skill as a visionary and an advocate. One noted that “Dr. Michel...goes out of her way to help any of the Warriors and her staff. She has approached situations which arise in a compassionate manner…ensuring a positive outcome…She is always willing to rise above the bare minimum and assist Warriors with appropriate and functional adaptations so they can complete their daily activities with less stress and/or pain. When operational pressures are running on high, her smile brings an overwhelming serene comfort that lends a sense of peace and tranquility. We salute Dr. Michel’s genius and appreciate all that she does.”

Another stated that she had “embraced [her] duties with fervor, grace and a willingness to succeed beyond expectations. [Sheri] has done and continues to do unthinkable things…linking bonds where none existed…she travels hither and fro, all in the name of spreading the [program’s] gospel, so that our purpose and mission, “Empowering Independence” is understood, appreciated and…valued by all who cross our paths…She is an all-encompassing professional, a keen listener, compassionate, diligent, understanding, encouraging, supportive, succinct, astute, creative, empowering juggernaut in the field of OT.”

The U.S. Army is clearly and understandably proud of Dr. Michel’s outstanding skills and empathy in delivering services to wounded service members that help them regain functional and enjoyable lives We are equally proud that Sheri is one of our esteemed alumni!
VCU’s Department of Occupational Therapy welcomed 42 new MSOT students on June 4, 2013. The class is made up of 5 men and 37 women who range in age from 20 to 44 years of age. Twenty-nine (69%) are Virginia residents, and 13 hail from North Carolina, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Alabama, Florida, Arizona, California, Washington D.C., and Washington state. This group continues the trend for students to obtain some work experience before returning to graduate school. Thirty three (79%) graduated in 2012 or before, and nine were brave enough to graduate this year and begin their graduate studies just a few weeks later. This year 12 members of the class completed their bachelors degrees at Virginia Tech. That is the biggest group of Hokies that VCU OT ever had in a single class before! Other class members attended other Virginia schools that include the University of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, George Mason University, Old Dominion University, VCU, the University of Mary Washington and Lynchburg College. Out of state schools included Meredith College, the University of Alabama, the University of North Carolina, the University of Delaware, New York University, North Carolina State, Northern Arizona University, the University of Notre Dame, Towson University, the University of British Columbia, UCLA, the University of Maryand Baltimore County, Houghton College, the University of South Florida-Sarasota, Rutgers, and Richard Stockton College. The students’ majors ranged widely and included Biology, Business, Communications, English, Environmental Studies, Exercise Science, Finance, Foods & Nutrition, History, Hospital Administration, Human Development, International Affairs, Kinesiology, Physical Education, Psychology, Social Science, Sociology, with some double majors in Art, Computer Science, Criminology, Psychology and Geography. This very talented group of 42 students was selected from over 300 qualified applications. They bring a wealth of wonderful travel, volunteer, and work experiences to their class. They began their summer with an intensive semester course orienting them to the profession of OT in 10 short days. That was followed by six weeks of immersion in Functional Human Anatomy. After a very busy summer they will be ready to settle into a traditionally paced fall semester of foundational coursework in group work, development, kinesiology, medical lectures and theory. Welcome VCU MSOT Class of December 2015!
Ms. Gretchen Young, a current grad III student in the MSOT program, received the Robert G. Davis Service Scholarship award sponsored by the Phi Kappa Phi honor society at their annual award ceremony in April. This award is given to a VCU graduate or undergraduate student who is in the upper 10% of their class and exemplifies a strong record of service to the University and the community. Ms. Young has a long history of service to the community prior to entering VCU’s MSOT program, with 14 years with Angel Tree, Sergeant Santa distribution center, Ronald McDonald house, and service dog training. Since entering the OT program, her commitment to service has continued, with holiday card outreach to local nursing homes and a naval ship deployed in Bahrain, gift and winter clothing drive for children in Church Hill, and the donation of non-perishable food that resulted in record donations to the Central Virginia Food Bank. She also initiated and planned a session with the Daily Planet Medical Respite program and set up stress relief programs for her classmates during exam week. Ms. Young is certainly deserving of this top award!

Celebration Time!

On January 4, 2013, graduates of the Class of 2103 participated in the Department’s traditional event celebrating their transition from graduate student to Department, School and University alumni status. This event, CONNECTIONS, is generously supported by the Medical College of Virginia Alumni Association (MCVAA) and was held for the ninth consecutive year this time. Following two days of post-FW II processing and an event kick-off with comments from Michael Russell-Greene, MCVAA Executive Director, attendees were treated to opportunities to relax over snacks and to win VCU and OT-themed door-prizes. As always, warmest thanks to alumni who attended and to MCVAA for making this celebration once more possible.

E-Newsletter Requests

If you would like to receive the VCU Department of Occupational Therapy Newsletter by email, please send your name and email address to lsmith@vcu.edu. Past Department Newsletters are posted on the Department webpage in the Alumni and Friends content area. The “Alumni Profile” found in the Alumni and Friends content area can also be used to make e-newsletter requests.
If you have any additional sightings of VCU-OT lip gloss at interesting, unique and/or international locations, please send images to jlteitel@vcu.edu for inclusion in future alumni newsletters.

The VCU-OT Lip Gloss sighted in Ghana.

Why Support the Department?

These are exciting times for the Department of Occupational Therapy. Over the past year, we managed to reconnect with several members of our alumni, and we have continued to advance our reputation for excellence through research, teaching, and service. This year we were fortunate to acquire several new assistive technology items, making our assistive tech lab a state-of-the-art training center for occupational therapists working in a wide range of practice settings. We begin the academic year with a plan to share our knowledge and skill in assistive technology through quality continuing education, provided by the top experts in the field. The on-going challenge of maintaining our labs at the cutting edge of technological advancement continues.

Research and laboratory space continues to be a priority under our current Chair, Dr. Al Copolillo. We plan to build upon our research in sensory processing, vision rehabilitation, and assistive technology and to garner additional research funding that will provide our students with essential research skills. We will work closely with Dr. Shelly Lane, our School of Allied Health Professions’ Assistant Dean of Research, to promote this agenda.

Support from alumni is greatly appreciated and will continue to be paramount to our students, faculty and staff. We appreciate what you do for us and look forward to your continued participation and unwavering support in these very difficult economic times. The Department has created the Occupational Therapy Priority Fund to help sustain academic programs, faculty and student development, and equipment and technology needs. These funds help bridge the gap between appropriated state support and what is additionally needed when providing the very best educational experience.

In addition to the Priority Fund, we continue to need Student Scholarship support. Our students continue to receive extensive clinical training and play an active role in the Department, thanks to an increased amount of service learning opportunities. Many students are choosing occupational therapy as a second career. Student scholarship support is always needed, especially now more than ever because of the current economic situation.

We hope you will consider making a financial commitment to the Department through a gift that meets your philanthropic desires. All gifts make a difference in the lives of our students and our profession.
I am pleased to support the Department of Occupational Therapy

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If you have any questions please contact: Jessica F. Gurganus at (804) 828-3269 or jf_gurganus@vcu.edu.

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