November 2020

Dear SJSU Alumni and Friends of the Occupational Therapy Department,

I hope this letter finds you well during these difficult times. COVID-19 has led to unprecedented changes on the SJSU campus, and while we work to ensure the safety of the SJSU community, knowing we have the support of the alumni family is particularly heartening. I am very happy to report that the Occupational Therapy Department at San Jose’ State University remains strong and vibrant. I am honored to be writing to you as the new Chair of the Occupational Therapy Department. I am a twice proud graduate of the OT Program, receiving my bachelor’s degree and post-professional master’s degree at SJSU. Dr. Winifred Schultz-Krohn completed her term as Chair in August and I hope to carry on her excellent leadership tradition.

As I’m sure most of you know by now, SJSU moved to a mostly on-line learning platform during the spring semester. This has continued into the fall semester, although we have been able to have a few face to face class meetings with our students, using creative scheduling to drastically reduce the number of students in the room at any given time, with the use of Protective Personal Equipment (PPE), and social distancing. Our clinics had to shift to a primarily telehealth model, and along with our practicum course began providing clinical experiences using Simucase simulation-based technology. Our devoted faculty took part in extensive on-line education over the summer to better prepare them to teach in a virtual learning environment and as a result our program continues to provide excellent learning opportunities for our students.

Another very concerning challenge brought on by COVID was the cancellation of the majority of fieldwork sites for our students. Our fieldwork coordinator, Cesar Arada, along with help from Professor Alison George, worked tirelessly to find new placements for these students. Sites have slowly begun accepting students again, and for this we are extremely grateful, but we are still in need of additional fieldwork placements. As alumni of our program, please consider being a fieldwork educator for one of our current students. We would be thrilled to have our students receive their clinical training from a SJSU alum! Please contact Cesar at cesar.arada@sjsu.edu for more information.

I am excited to report that our plans for the entry-level Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) continue to move forward. The curriculum has been approved by the College and is now being reviewed by the University. The OTD is scheduled to admit the first cohort in Spring 2023. SJSU will be the first public university in California to offer this degree! The entry level degree for an occupational therapist is at both the Master’s and OTD levels, and the faculty felt a deep commitment to maintaining access to the profession.
To provide the greatest opportunity for students to become occupational therapists, the faculty voted to retain the MSOT degree in addition to offering the OTD degree. We are also proud to offer an Advanced Certificate in Mindfulness-Based Healthcare and Human Services (MBHHS) to prepare healthcare and human service professionals to meet the complex needs of evolving work environments. Please visit https://www.sjsu.edu/pdp/programs/mindfulness/requirements/ for more information.

We are pleased to have welcomed several new faculty this past year; Katrina Long and Melisa Kaye join us as tenure track faculty, and Cesar Arada comes to us as our fieldwork coordinator. I am happy to announce that we are recruiting for a new tenure track faculty position that will begin in the Fall of 2021. Professor and previous Chair Dr. Heidi Pendleton, quietly retired and although we hope to have her back to teach a class now and then, we miss her wonderful daily presence. We all wish her the very best and we hope to soon have the opportunity to celebrate her retirement and recognize her many years of excellent service to the Occupational Therapy Department.

Our faculty continue to be leaders in the profession. In April 2020, Dr. Megan Chang and Dr. Luis Arabit were awarded the prestigious Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association (FAOTA) credential. Dr. Arabit was also the 2020 California Foundation of Occupational Therapy (CFOT) Honored Lecturer. During the 2020 Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC) conference, Dr. Wynn Schultz-Krohn received the Lifetime Achievement Award. I also was honored and grateful to receive the OTAC Outstanding Service Award.

More Spartan Pride!!

- San Jose State University was recently ranked the #1 Most Transformative University in the Nation by Money magazine:  
  https://money.com/best-colleges/rankings/most-transformative-colleges/

- The SJSU Occupational Therapy Program was featured as one of the Leading Healthcare Programs 2020-2021:  
  https://www.newsweek.com/insights/leading-healthcare-programs-2020

If you believe that San Jose State University and the Occupational Therapy Department contributed to, or were instrumental in your professional development, please help us now with a generous financial contribution. If as a student you received a department scholarship, emergency fund grant or no-interest fieldwork loan - please consider how beneficial that was to your success at school - and give generously to help our current students. There is no more important time to give than now and there is no more important investment you could make to your profession than to support the school and program of which you can be proud. With your help we are able to support students and faculty to attend state and national conferences where they have consistently shared their research through presentations and posters. We have created donor categories and recognize donors on our website. A donation of $500.00 and above is recognized at the Diamond level, a donation of $300.00 - $499.00 is at the Gold level, $200.00 - $299.00 is the Silver level, and a donation of $150.00 - $199.00 is the Bronze level. Please contact us if you want information about including our program in your will or trust.
Thank you to all our wonderful donors who continue to support the San Jose’ State University Occupational Therapy program as we prepare occupational therapists to meet the needs of California and beyond. We created a Special Donor Recognition section on the alumni page of our website: https://www.sjsu.edu/occupationaltherapy/Alumni/. We are very grateful for the support you have provided to the department.

With your generous financial help, we will be able to ensure that the Occupational Therapy Department continues to excel and to graduate exceptionally prepared occupational therapists.

Each and every contribution has special meaning to the department as it reflects the pride and respect you feel toward your SJSU Occupational Therapy family and our future. Your gift will truly make a difference. Thank you for your generous support.

Warm regards,

Jerilyn (Gigi) Smith, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
Chair and Associate Professor – San Jose State Occupational Therapy Department