



# Occupational Therapy

## College of Science & Health

Occupational therapists work with people of all ages facing physical, emotional, or mental challenges due to injury or disease. Occupational therapists are part of a healthcare team that may also include physicians, physician assistants, physical therapists, speech pathologists, and recreational therapists. "Occupation" refers to those everyday meaningful tasks that individuals do on a daily basis. Students who choose a career in occupational therapy will help others participate fully in the "occupations" of their life. Graduates of the University of Wisconsin—La Crosse Master of Science Occupational Therapy Program are entry-level occupational therapists who apply scholarly skills and attitudes to their clinical practice and are prepared to assume leadership roles. Graduates are generalists prepared to work in a variety of treatment settings including medical centers, school systems, community centers, skilled nursing facilities, and industrial settings.

### Graduate Program

#### Master of Science:

- Occupational Therapy

### Program Features

The mission of the Occupational Therapy Program at UW-L is to graduate competent entry-level practitioners who apply scholarly skills and attitudes to their clinical practice and are prepared to assume leadership roles. Our graduates will be leaders and respect people of diverse backgrounds. The 30-month program is designed to graduate generalists prepared to work in a variety of treatment settings.

The academic portion consists of classroom, laboratory, and fieldwork experiences. The curriculum is designed to include basic foundational sciences along with three basic themes: Practice Skills, Leadership, and Clinical Scholarship. All themes are supported and integrated throughout the curriculum with coursework grounded in the science of Human Occupation. During the academic portion of the program, students learn about the relationship of occupation to health and well-being and the effects that disease and/or dysfunction may have on occupation. Study will include coursework that

addresses occupations and daily tasks inherent in different stages of life and concepts basic to occupational therapy to enhance independent living when disease or pathology are present.

Clinical experience is pertinent to the program's success in training occupational therapy practitioners. In addition to the fieldwork experiences in the didactic portion of the curriculum, a minimum of six months of full-time clinical training is required in at least two settings commonly served by occupational therapists. This clinical training must be completed within 24 months of completion of the didactic portion of the curriculum.

Once all curriculum requirements are completed, including didactic and clinical portions, a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy is awarded. At that time, the graduate is eligible to sit for the National Certification Examination administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). Most states require a license to practice occupational therapy, and the results of the NBCOT examination are used as the basis for obtaining state licensure. A felony conviction may affect a graduate's ability to sit for the national certification or to attain state licensure.

The Occupational Therapy Program at UW-La Crosse is accredited by:

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education,  
4720 Montgomery Lane  
PO Box 31220  
Bethesda, MD 20824-1220  
Phone: (301) 652-6611, ext. 2914  
E-mail: [accred@aota.org](mailto:accred@aota.org)

#### Admission

Because of the intensity of the program and the level of interpersonal skills required as an occupational therapist, the UW-L program is seeking applicants with a strong academic background and strong interpersonal skills. Prior experience in rehabilitative health care is an indicator of interest and commitment to the field of occupational therapy. The admission process to the program is multifaceted including application, letters of recommendation, and healthcare work/volunteer experience.

Specific factors considered in the admission process include:

- Academic preparation
- Commitment to working with people
- Professional skills
- Strong written and oral communication skills

#### Academic Prerequisites

At the time of application candidates must have the following prerequisites completed or be able to demonstrate a plan for completion of the prerequisites prior to enrollment in the program:

- Completion of a Bachelor's Degree (or be enrolled in the Dual Degree Program at UW-L)
- 6-8 credits in Anatomy and Physiology with lawww.u
- 4 credits of Physics with lab
- 3 credits in Lifespan Development
- 3-4 credits of Statistics or Principles of Research
- 3 credits of Abnormal Psychology
- 3 credits of Sociology or Anthropology
- 20 hours of clinical experience supervised by an occupational therapist (see suggestions below)
- A minimum grade point average of 3.0. In addition, grades obtained in prerequisites may be no lower than a "C," and no more than two "C's" are acceptable.

#### **Suggested Health Care Experiences**

- Occupational therapy clinic in a hospital
- Occupational therapy clinic in a long-term care facility
- Special education department for physically challenged students in a school setting
- Rehabilitation clinic with supervision by other allied health professionals

#### **Additional Information**

The Occupational Therapy Program at the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse is housed in the Health Professions Department in the College of Science and Health. All coursework takes place in a state-of-the-art Health Science Center. The Center houses several allied health programs from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Western Technical College, Gundersen Lutheran Hospital, Viterbo, and Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare. Students share opportunities for cooperative learning with students of other rehabilitation based professions. For more information on the La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium, visit [www.lacrosseconsortium.org](http://www.lacrosseconsortium.org).

## **Professional Associations**

Occupational Therapists may belong to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). Additional information about the profession can be obtained from their Web site at [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org) or by calling (301) 652-2682.

Additional information can be obtained at the Web site for the Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association: [www.wota.net](http://www.wota.net).

## **Occupational Outlook**

### **Employment Outlook**

According to the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook, "Employment of occupational therapists is expected to increase by 26 percent between 2008 and 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations. The increasing elderly population will drive growth in the demand for occupational therapy services. The demand for occupational therapists should continue to rise as a result of the increasing number of individuals with disabilities or limited function who require therapy services....Growth in the population 75 years and older—an age group that suffers from high incidences of disabling conditions—also will increase demand for therapeutic services." (Retrieved from [www.bls.gov/oco/ocos078.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos078.htm) in July 2011).

### **Dual Degree Option**

The dual degree program is designed to allow a student to complete a Bachelor's degree in psychology and a Master's degree in occupational therapy in 5.5 years of schooling (plus summers). The dual degree reduces the overall number of undergraduate credits students take prior to acceptance in the graduate occupational therapy program. The

dual degree option does not guarantee admission into the Occupational Therapy Program. Any student with fewer than 60 credits with a GPA of 3.00 or above is eligible to declare the dual degree. The sooner a student starts the program the more course flexibility he/she will have. More information is available through the Occupational Therapy Program.

Detailed information regarding the Occupational Therapy Program can be obtained by contacting the program's office directly through the information below:

**Occupational Therapy Program**  
**4031 Health Science Center**  
**La Crosse, WI 54601**  
**(608) 785-6620**  
[www.uwlax.edu/ot](http://www.uwlax.edu/ot)