Graduate Program

Do you enjoy being creative and helping others achieve their best?
Are you interested in working as part of a healthcare team?
If yes, then becoming an occupational therapist may be the right fit for you. Occupational therapists help patients develop, recover or maintain participation in meaningful activities such as going to school or work, doing household chores, participating in hobbies or simply moving around in their environment.

To become an occupational therapist, students must apply to graduate school after completing an undergraduate degree. In UWL's nationally-accredited Occupational Therapy Program, students take two years of classes, which include a wide variety of foundational science and psychology courses, as well as hands-on clinical courses. Students then complete 24 weeks of fieldwork internships at facilities throughout the U.S. to gain valuable hands-on experience working directly with occupational therapists do on a daily basis.

What is Occupational Therapy?
Occupational therapists work with people of all ages facing physical, emotional or mental challenges due to pain, injury, illness or disability. They work directly with clients to assess strengths and limitations and create goals for participation. Treatment may include use of adapted techniques or equipment, modification to home/work environments, and education and training on strategies for success. Occupational therapists are part of a healthcare team that may also include physicians, physician assistants, physical therapists, speech pathologists and recreational therapist, among others.

Occupational therapy jobs
Following graduation, students will have obtained a Master’s of Science Degree in Occupational Therapy. Students are then eligible to sit for a national board exam for certification and require licensing in the state where they will practice. Graduates of the UWL Occupational Therapy Program are trained as entry-level generalists who are prepared to work in a variety of treatment settings. Specialty certifications are available in several areas with additional training and experience such as hand therapy, vestibular rehabilitation and academia.

Areas of practice
- Hospitals
- Clinics
- Skilled nursing facilities
- Long-term care
- Mental health facilities
- Home health
- Early intervention
- Schools
- Community-based (group homes, wellness programs)
- Business and industry/ergonomics

Examples of individuals OTs may work with
- Premature infants in the neonatal unit
- School age children who struggle with attention or getting around their classroom
- Individuals after a car accident, broken arm/leg or significant illness
- Individuals hospitalized after a hip replacement surgery, stroke or brain injury
- Older adults struggling with memory and the aging body
- Older adults in a nursing home with pneumonia or after a fall
- Individuals struggling with coping skills due to depression/anxiety
What distinguishes UWL's Occupational Therapy program?

- **Small class sizes**
  Class sizes are limited to less than 30 students to allow low student-to-faculty ratios for personalized feedback and relationships.

- **National accreditation**
  The UWL OT Program is nationally accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Accreditation (ACOTE).

- **Hands-on learning**
  A variety of hands-on learning experiences are woven throughout the curriculum in coursework, labs, community fieldwork experiences and an on-campus clinic staffed by students.

- **Community engagement**
  Students have multiple opportunities to engage and impact the La Crosse community through volunteering, visiting community sites and working with community volunteers to meet population needs.

- **Student organization**
  The UWL program has a vibrant Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) whose mission is to promote awareness of the profession in the community.

- **Success rates on exams**
  The program has a 100% pass rate on the National Board Certification for Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) Exam since the program started.

- **Health Science Consortium**
  All coursework occurs in a state-of-the-art Health Science Center on campus, which houses several allied health programs from multiple local universities and facilities (Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant Studies, Radiation Therapy, etc). This allows shared opportunities for inter-professional collaboration and research.

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**Occupational Therapy**

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