When Michele Jacquin enrolled in the occupational therapy masters program at Tufts in 2014, she “wasn’t thinking much about research. My mind was more on what I’d be learning in the classroom,” she says. All that changed when Gary Bedell invited students to participate in his research on an app-based coaching intervention (Social Participation And Navigation or SPAN: http://sites.tufts.edu/garybedell/projects/research/), designed to help teens with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) with their social participation goals. Given her prior experience working with patients with TBI, Jacquin signed on to the project, which she worked on throughout her time at Tufts. “Participating in this research was an invaluable part of my Tufts education,” Jacquin explains. “It gave me the opportunity to take the complex ideas I was learning in the classroom and put them into practice.”

Students and faculty alike benefit from the rich, dynamic culture of research at the Department of Occupational Therapy. Professor Linda Tickle-Degnen has engaged hundreds of students in her quality-of-life research for people with Parkinson’s disease (PD). Tickle-Degnen says that in her efforts to progress major research initiatives for people with PD, she relies on students to help further that work and believes firmly in the “collaborative, inter-dependent research environment.”

For example, student Grace Lee is assisting in Tickle-Degnen’s 5-year National Science Foundation grant to study the use of social robots in the self-management of care for people with PD. Lee recently helped run a study that used a social robot to help patients track and sort their medication; she worked with software engineers to assist in developing the robots, crunched data, and learned a great deal about robots’ capacities and limitations. According to Tickle-Degnen, students like Lee bring their “own perspective and expertise to the research, which in turn contributes to the value of the work.”

As a student, Lee says participating in “real-world” research has been a critical aspect of her education. “In the classroom, you are taking in what your professors—who have years of clinical background—have to teach you. In doing research, I’m able to use that knowledge but also add my own suggestions and insights,” she explains. Lee also says that doing hands-on research with patients has made her classroom learning come alive. “I’ve gained a much clearer understanding of what it’s really like to live with Parkinson’s disease,” she says.

Other students participating in faculty-led research agree. Priscilla Park says that participating in research has taught her about adhering to research protocols while remaining client centered. “I’ve learned the importance of balancing research components and gaining clinical experience at the same time,” she says. She and fellow student Allison Phillips participated in their Level II fieldwork with part-time lecturer Megan Gately, working on research related to tele-health, the virtual delivery of medical care. At the Department of Veteran Affairs’ New England Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers (GRECC), Bedford location, Gately is piloting a technology-based home safety evaluation for people with dementia, which is designed to help older adults living in rural areas. Using a Skype-like interface, the remote evaluation is designed to help patients, family members, and caregivers minimize risk and maximize quality of life for people facing cognitive decline.

Gately says that Level II students have not only contributed to the practical aspects of the research, such as conducting literature reviews, but also bring “fresh eyes,” which is critically important when working with older populations. “Intergenerational work is rife with opportunity,” Gately says. “Because of their age, backgrounds, and experience with technology, students offer a different perspective that is valuable to any research endeavor.”

For lecturer Peggy Morris, seeing things through a different lens informs both the research and the students. This spring, Morris en-
A lot can happen in a year. I had a very productive and enjoyable sabbatical, and our faculty has been busy doing innovative research and teaching, writing grants, publishing papers, and collaborating with colleagues across the Tufts campuses and beyond. On the Medford campus, students and faculty have been actively collaborating on research projects in the Collaborative Learning and Innovation Complex (CLIC) and in the community. In this issue, you can read more about some of the many dynamic faculty-student initiatives going on. In addition, our professors continue to expand their work at the medical and dental schools, and we recently launched an online certificate in school-based practice created and coordinated by Lecturer Peggy Morris.

Perhaps the most exciting news of the past year is that the department received approval from AOTA's Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) to develop its entry-level Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program. With the rising complexity of healthcare and the challenges it creates for occupational therapists, OT students will need an additional layer of skills and training to become leaders in their field and competent evidence-based practitioners. As such, AOTA has encouraged the profession and occupational therapy departments nationwide to develop entry-level OTD programs. With ACOTE’s recent approval, we can now create a program that will keep Tufts at the forefront of our rapidly changing profession.

I’m also pleased to announce that we have hired Jessica Harvey (now senior lecturer) to be the director of our current entry-level OT program and to spearhead the development of the new entry-level OTD program. Jessica has expertise in adult physical rehabilitation, adaptive sports, and interdisciplinary healthcare management. She will work with ACOTE, faculty, staff, students, and key community stakeholders to create the new curriculum, which we expect will provide our students with the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to become effective practitioners, leaders, and collaborators. The new program will also help students be more successful at generating and testing innovative and evidence-based solutions to address society’s diverse, complex health care and occupational needs.

None of these exciting developments could have happened this year without the guidance and expertise of Professor Sharan Schwartzberg, who chaired the Department during my sabbatical. I would like to thank Sharan for not only keeping things running smoothly, but also helping our department flourish under her watchful eye. So much good has occurred in my absence, and I look forward to what lies ahead!

Gary Bedell, Ph.D., OT, FAOTA
Professor and Chair

Nonagenarian Alum Shares Stories of Vibrant Career

Tufts alumnus Tom Snow, (ENG51, 82P, 84P) recently shared his many vibrant stories with students in Janet Curran Brooks’ Interactive Reasoning class. The sharp 92-year-old engineer talked about the hyperbolic paraboloid house that he built, as well as the vintage cars that he continues to drive and show. Students were also treated to Snow’s whittling and wood carving projects; he has a passion for all kinds of wood and its origins. Although Snow claimed that in recent years he hasn’t kept up with his engineering skills due to all the newer technologies, students were awed at how well-versed in those technologies Snow appeared to be. Curran Brooks invited Snow to the class to help students learn how to elicit a person’s story from spoken narrative and to sharpen their listening skills. While the students certainly gained those skills during Snow’s engaging talk, they were also left with the contagious joie de vie that Mr Snow embraces. This active community dweller left students with a lasting picture of how engaged and independent a nonagenarian can be.
For alumna Kris Mastrangelo (BSOT89, A20P), occupational therapy is poised to become the leadership profession in the healthcare industry. Speaking in Sharan Schwartzberg’s doctoral leadership seminar last fall, Mastrangelo—president and CEO of the healthcare consulting firm Harmony Healthcare International (HHI)—impressed students with her “rags to riches” story and her perspective on OTs as leaders.

“With its interdisciplinary approach, use of advanced technology, and rapidly rising level of intellect, OT has the power to be part of every aspect of healthcare,” Mastrangelo said.

Born in Salem and raised in Peabody, Massachusetts, Mastrangelo worked three jobs to pay her way through Tufts, then earned an MBA from Salem State University. After years of doing direct care with seniors, Mastrangelo founded HHI in 2001. A nationally recognized healthcare consulting company, HHI services nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, acute care centers, rehabilitation hospitals, and home health organizations in the areas of compliance, audit, analysis, regulatory, reimbursement, education, and efficiency. Through training, web-based resources, symposia, consultations, and other consulting services, HHI helps healthcare facilities address the complex problems facing their industry and ensures safe, quality client care.

In speaking with students, Mastrangelo said that to this day, she still uses what she learned at then-BSOT in the running of her company. She recalls taking Schwartzberg's group process class in the old elementary school located at the end of Capen Street (BSOT’s “home” in the 1980s). Initially, Mastrangelo didn’t understand the relevance of the course material. “We sat around an oval table and had to perform write-ups of ‘group dynamics,’ including body language, personality emergence, roles, responsibilities, and the evolution of the group process. I didn’t quite see the point,” she laughed. However, Mastrangelo later found that the course was not only beneficial, but “was one of the most influential classes” impacting her life. “I use these strategies every day, not only for patient interactions, but for business meetings, family communications…essentially any exchanges involving people,” she explained.

Mastrangelo stressed that Schwartzberg’s group process focus “is a potent intervention utilized in healthcare. Unfortunately, Medicare reimbursement in the skilled nursing setting limits the usage of groups. This type of research needs to be brought in front of governmental policy makers in order to lessen the group restrictions.” She encouraged students to be leaders in bringing these types of interventions to the fore.

In fact, the OTs of today need to advocate strongly for occupational therapy as a way to enhance patients’ quality of life in all settings, not just the “typical” ones such as nursing facilities, rehabilitation centers, and schools.

“Physicians sometimes miss the OT component and how it can be helpful to their patients. As occupational therapists, we must lead that discussion in order to break into ‘nontraditional’ OT settings—whether that’s a doctor’s office, a policymaker’s office, or a boardroom. I believe there needs to be an OT in every room,” she said.

Mastrangelo also cited examples such as architecture, robotics, and public policy as nontraditional areas in which occupational therapy can play a role. “At the end of the day, occupational therapy is everywhere. There is so much opportunity in this field!” she said.

Yet, students also need to have a focused, solutions-oriented mindset in order to become leaders in occupational therapy. “When I started my own business, I had no customers and no money. It was the scariest thing I’d ever done,” she recalled. “But I had courage—and I had my Tufts education. That was a game-changer for me.”

Students were inspired by Mastrangelo’s energy and encouragement, and took advantage of having this dynamic leader in their midst. They asked many questions, curious about how she used her OT training to become a successful businesswoman and company CEO. Mastrangelo cited her own “3P” mantra—purpose, perspective, and play—to illustrate her OT training at work. “I still use this ‘OT lens’ every day,” she explained. “My purpose is to apply occupational therapy in all settings. My perspective is that I am grateful to have the training I need to reach that purpose. My play is my work—my occupation—because I enjoy it.”

Mastrangelo encouraged students to follow through with what they’ve learned in the classroom—that occupation and meaningful participation in activity—is everything. “That’s what’s common in the human experience,” she said. “As an OT, find your passion and pursue it.”

ALUMNI PROFILE:
Kris Mastrangelo Wants “an OT in Every Room.”

“OT has the power to be part of every aspect of healthcare.”

Courtesy of Kris Mastrangelo
When second-year OT student Monica Salazar wasn’t feeling well on the morning of July 22, 2016, she thought she was dehydrated, or perhaps suffering from a migraine. However, by the next day, Salazar was in Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) with blurred vision, nausea, a fever, and, ultimately, weakness in her right arm. After CT scans, MRIs, spinal taps, and consults with neurologists and infectious disease specialists, she was diagnosed with mycoplasma encephalomyelitis—a rare type of encephalitis that affects vision and motor skills, among other areas of the central nervous system.

Salazar’s diagnosis set her on a long journey of recovery—and gave her deep insight into the patient side of occupational therapy. During her 10-day stay at MGH, she saw multiple OTs and worked on arm exercises and day-to-day tasks such as dressing, toileting, and making tea. When she was discharged on August 1, she began a six-month OT regimen that not only got her back to the tasks of daily living, but will also—she believes—make her a better occupational therapist. “My illness taught me so much about where patients are coming from and has given me deeper empathy for what they are experiencing,” she says.

Salazar says that as an OT student, she would often think about a broad list of skills that a patient with right arm weakness would find difficult, such as cooking or making a bed. But after her illness, she began “categorizing occupation into smaller and smaller tasks. Even the tiniest activities, like zipping my pants or putting a bag onto the kitchen counter, were frustratingly difficult,” she explains.

As a patient, Salazar also gained greater appreciation for the complex problem-solving skills OTs must acquire to do their jobs well. “I give my team so much credit for helping me address the most basic of issues, such as how can I carry my purse and use my subway pass at the same time?” Salazar says. Having taken anatomy, neuroanatomy, physiology, and kinesiology at Tufts right before her illness, she understood not only the mechanics of her challenges, but also the clinical reasoning behind the goals and tasks her OT team put before her. And she enjoyed learning from them. “It was enlightening to talk to my therapists and ask questions as both a patient and a student of OT,” she says.

Today, Salazar is nearly fully recovered; her vision is back to normal and her strength and mobility have almost completely returned to her right arm. She is currently completing her Level II fieldwork at the Judge Baker Children’s Center, working with children with learning, emotional, and behavioral challenges. While her own OT interests lie in doing group work and working with those who experience mental (affective, cognitive, perceptual) and social participation issues rather than in physical medicine, she is still fascinated by and appreciative of the dedicated team of OTs who helped her recover. “I loved learning about my own body mechanics and seeing the depth of understanding my therapists needed in order to help me!” she says.

While Salazar “wouldn’t wish this illness on anyone,” she says her experience has given her a perspective on occupational therapy that she would never have gleaned otherwise. “Now, one year later, I understand how a person transitions through an injury and what that trajectory looks like,” she says. “I can take a step back and analyze what I went through with a clinical eye. That insight will, I hope, make me a better OT. I know I will always keep learning from it.”
E
ven while taking on the busy task of interim chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy, Sharan L. Schwartzberg, EdD, OT, FAOTA, CGP, FAGPA, has found time for many other pursuits this year. At the Tufts Medical Center inpatient psychiatry unit, she continues to collaborate with psychiatrist and Tufts assistant professor of Comprehensive Care, School of Dentistry Ellen Patterson, MD; Ellen White, OT, Head of Psychiatric Occupational Therapy; two dental students Holly Fadie and Hayley Sacks; and two occupational therapy students Kathryn Colleran and Hannah Polshuk. The team is working to better understand the perceptions of psychiatric patients’ oral health and implications for group intervention. The program includes developing an occupational therapy oral health inventory that can help occupational therapists identify and refer patients at risk for oral health problems.

According to Schwartzberg, elders and patients with mental health challenges are at high risk of having dental health issues, often because they are unable to brush their teeth effectively, do not have good awareness of dental hygiene, or cannot accurately identify their symptoms. “This inventory checklist is intended to be administered to elders in assisted care settings and patients in a psychiatric unit or day program in order to assess their risk. Then they can be referred to a dentist,” she explains. The team is currently assessing the inventory’s effectiveness and planning focus group meetings with dentists and occupational therapists to get additional feedback. The goal is to put the inventory into practice upon completion of the focus group study.

Schwartzberg has also continued her collaborations with occupational therapy students and faculty at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW). She has been studying learning outcomes of the optional Group Theory and Leader Reasoning training for ZHAW students participating in OT internships. The training helps interns develop their leadership and group work skills. This year, Schwartzberg, along with Tufts research assistants Mary Barnes and Christopher DeLorenzo, worked virtually with the students, who completed educational online self-assessment tools and reflective journal entries. The students also participated in a focus group designed to understand the impact these training opportunities had on their group leadership experience.

Schwartzberg has received many accolades for her interdisciplinary work, and 2017 was no different. In March, she—along with other faculty at the Pain Research, Education, and Policy (PREP) Program at the Tufts School of Medicine—was awarded the Presidential Commendation by the American Academy of Pain Medicine (AAPM). This award honors members of the medical community who have made major contributions to the education of others about pain medicine. Schwartzberg says she is “honored to be recognized along with PREP’s renowned faculty, including its director Daniel Carr, MD.” She has worked with Carr and Assistant Professor Libby Bradshaw for several years to develop a tool that measures team function in health care settings.

The Power of Group: PhD student Aliska Gibbins uses the Functional Group Model to teach math

Last spring, Aliska Gibbins was working on her PhD in education at Tufts when she enrolled in Sharan Schwartzberg’s OT course Running Effective Groups: An Interdisciplinary Experience. Gibbins, who has a PhD in math, was looking to better understand how group work can be used in the mathematics courses she teaches at Northeastern University. She says the class gave her a unique perspective on how Schwartzberg’s Functional Group Model can be effective in “teaching math to students who have had negative experiences with math in the past.”

The Functional Group Model focuses on working towards a common goal, a concept Gibbins says is very effective in teaching math. While taking Schwartzberg’s class, Gibbins tested the model in one of her math classes at Northeastern. During test reviews, she broke students into small groups and asked them to solve problems together. Gibbins says students “had a terrific exchange of ideas around reaching this common goal (solving the problem) and discussed where their difficulties lay. They delved deeper into math and learned to explain concepts to one another,” she says.

Gibbins recently received IRB approval for the study Functional Group Model in Mathematics Instruction, which expands the small study she conducted at Northeastern. She says the Functional Group Model has a great deal to offer math instruction. “In her class, Sharan talked a lot about the ‘here and now’—addressing issues as they arise. This is similar to math. You have to think through problems, not just memorize,” she says.
From working in on-campus labs and in the community to conducting and presenting research, our students, faculty, and alumni have been busy in a wide range of OT-related pursuits. Below is a sampling of their accomplishments.

Amy Fleischer, MS, OT, (15), served as a teaching fellow for the assistive technology innovations course during spring 2017. Fleischer recently spoke about the role OT plays in maker space research. “Here at Tufts, because our OTs and engineers are co-located in the same building for the first time, we are poised to collaborate,” she said. “The OTs understand the clients’ needs well and the engineers have all this fabrication knowledge. My goal has been to build the relationship between these departments so that we can apply our knowledge and create more innovative solutions.” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUdPmRraqRs&feature=youtu.be).

Fleischer also collaborated with engineers and clothing designers in the Open Style Lab at MIT to develop adaptive clothing for people with disabilities. Working with an engineer from the Olin College of Engineering, designers from the Samsung Art & Design Institute in South Korea, and The Woolmark Company, Fleischer helped develop SUITable, an adaptive sports coat designed to be adjustable for continuous thermal comfort. The coat was created for a client with a spinal cord injury who has thermal comfort and adjustability needs. “We feel that clothing for individuals like him ought to reflect more than the medical needs of this community. SUITable’s increased adjustability allows our client to be more comfortable in a variety of settings and to continue living his life in style,” Fleischer explained on the Woolmark website (http://www.woolmark.com/news-events/news/open-style-lab-creates-clothing-for-all-abilities/).

Last fall, News & Notes featured Jessica Harney’s work with New England Disabled Sports (NEDS) ski program at Loon Mountain, New Hampshire. Over the past two years, students have been placed at NEDS-Loon Mountain for a one-week, intensive Level I Fieldwork and service learning opportunity. But for the first time this year, from January-March, 2017, Tufts offered the program as a 12-week, full-time Level II fieldwork. Tufts students Jenny Quinn, Sarah Sherman, Hannah Koch, and Kirsten Prue participated and also obtained their Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) certification to guide skiers with visual impairments.

Student Awards

The following students earned Department of Occupational Therapy awards at the Spring, 2017 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) Awards Ceremony:

Bekenstein Family Endowment: Master’s degree students Katie Buttafarrow, Shawna Carpenter, Jenna Eldridge, Adriana Esco- bar, Julie Marquardt, & Monica Salazar

Marjorie B. Greene Award: OTD alumna Mary Alicia Barnes

Joy Ann Greisen Award: Master’s degree students Katie Colle- ran, Arielle Danziger, Gwen Niven, & Hannah Polshuk

Virginia Nedved Cook Collaborative Research Award: OTD alumna Erin McQuaid & OTD student Dan Houlihan

The following students earned awards from these prestigious organizations:

AOTA/MAOT Karen Jacobs Scholarship: OTD student Denise LaRocca

Tufts Graduate Institute for Teaching (GIFT) Award: OTD student Meredith Grinnell

Faculty Awards and Honors

The following faculty members have earned awards and recognition during the past academic year:

Keren Ladin was recently selected as a prestigious Greenwall Foundation’s Faculty Scholar (http://greenwall.org/current-and-former-scholars.php). Dr. Ladin’s abstract “Ethical ideology predicts use of social support in kidney transplant listing decisions: Results from a discrete choice experiment” was also awarded the “Top Abstract” by the Surgical and Perioperative Interest Group Academy Health Annual Research Meeting. (June 2017) https://twitter.com/AmirGhaferi/status/878686415239905280

Margaret Morris earned the 2017 Tufts Faculty Teaching with Technology Award.

Congratulations to all of our award recipients and honorees!

Publications: (* indicates student)


Presentations: (* indicates student)


May-Benson, T. Assessment and Measures of Sensory Integrative Functions (keynote speaker). European Sensory Integration Congress, Vienna, Austria (June, 2017).


AOTA Conference 2017: Poster Presentations


May-Benson, T., Mailloux, Z., Parham, L.D., & Roley, S.S. Use of the Ayres Sensory Integration® Fidelity Measure to Teach Entry Level and Post Professional Students.

AOTA Conference 2017: Short course
May-Benson, T., Goodrich, R. & Sawyer, S. An Approach to Implementing Goal Attainment Scaling as a Sensory Integration Outcome in Clinical Practice.

May-Benson, T. & Schaaf, R. SISIS Annual Program: Identifying Outcomes in Ayres Sensory Integration.

Katie Colleran OT/s and Michelle Moser OT/s enjoy a classic photo opportunity with Fred Sammons at AOTA’s Centennial Conference in Philadelphia.
Student-Faculty Research, continued from page 1
gaged students from her post professional masters cohort to help de-
velop a customized “hand” for Alan Misura, a 13-year-old boy with
a congenital hand malformation. Using 3-D printing technology, the
interdisciplinary team of students and faculty from occupational ther-
apy and biomedical engineering shared insights from their respective
disciplines to build a paddle-like prototype and customize it to meet
the boy’s needs—which included cutting his own food and holding
his hockey stick.

According to Morris, engaging students in this type of interdisci-
plinary, collaborative work provides them with the chance to under-
stand how other professions think and problem solve. “We come to
client-centered care from very different lenses,” she explains. “Con-
ducting interdisciplinary collaborations teaches students to work with
other professionals, which is critical to being an effective OT.”

In addition, as occupational therapy moves towards the entry-
level OTD, practice-based research is becoming a more essential part
of students’ repertoires. According to Megan Gately, “students must
develop real, hands-on experience in order to be successful in the OT
profession of the future.”

Linda Tickle-Degnen agrees. She says the “dialogue” that occurs
between students and faculty during any research interaction primes
students for the challenges they will face as occupational therapists.
“Research teaches students how to work with data, publish, make
mistakes, double and triple check their results. It also teaches them to
ask questions, challenge convention, and think for themselves. These
are the hallmarks of the OT profession.”

Accolades, continued from page 7

McLaren, J.* & Tickle-Degnen, L. Metabolic Equivalence of the
Activity Card Sort: A Coding Study.

Stewart, C., Saint-Hilaire, M., Thomas, C., & Tickle-Degnen, L.
The Association of Energy Depletion Problems with Retention
of Daily Life Activities in People With Parkinson’s Disease.

Tickle-Degnen, L., Eldridge, J., & Stevenson, M. Social Self-
Management of Parkinson’s Disease.

MAOT Annual Conference 2016: Poster Presentations
Barnes, M., Schwartzberg, S., Bedell, G., Counselman, E., &
Marfio, E. Group Leader Self-Assessment (GLSA): Reliability
and Validity.

Colleran, K.*, Kirschner, K.*, Moser, M.*, Rousseau, M.*, & Be-
derg, G. Responsiveness of The Child and Adolescent Scale of
Participation (CASP) Items over Three Years.