

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN – FLINT
REGENTS COMMUNICATION**

**Approved by the Regents
May 20, 2010**

ACTION REQUEST

SUBJECT: Doctor of Occupational Therapy Degree (DrOT) at the University of Michigan-Flint

ACTION REQUESTED: Approval to grant the Doctor of Occupational Therapy Degree through the School of Health Professions and Studies at the University of Michigan-Flint

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2011

The School of Health Professions and Studies at the University of Michigan-Flint proposes to offer a Doctor of Occupational Therapy (DrOT). The proposed online program will advance occupational therapy practice in Michigan by developing occupational therapists to assume broader professional roles and become leaders who can influence and effect change to improve health and quality of life. These leaders will work in multiple levels of society and in various areas of the profession including policy development and implementation, clinical practice, entrepreneurial practice, education, and research.

The last fifteen years has seen a trend toward doctoral level education in occupational therapy. Currently, there are no post-professional doctoral programs in occupational therapy offered in Michigan and only 17 across the United States, with only 1 of the 17 offering a fully online format. While several occupational therapy programs in the United States have offered post-professional master's degrees, these are phasing out in favor of the post-professional doctoral degree.

The National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapy requires occupational therapists to participate in continuing education and, in fact, they are in the process of promulgating rules which will include a continuing education requirement for re-licensure. Occupational therapy faculty members are one of the targeted groups for this program. While the Accreditation Council of Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) does not accredit post-professional programs at this time, it does recognize the DrOT as a terminal degree in occupational therapy and requires 50% of full-time faculty teaching in a program educating master entry-level students to have a doctoral degree. And, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools strongly recommends university faculty have a degree higher than the one that they teach. In addition, both organizations have received countless requests from current occupational therapists indicating interest in pursuing doctoral degree options. The proposed DrOT program could help Michigan's occupational therapists meet these continuing education requirements and desire for an advanced degree.

The primary audience includes practicing clinicians and students with an entry-level professional degree in occupational therapy; those who are currently licensed and/or certified to practice occupational therapy; or those who want to advance to a doctoral degree in the field of occupational therapy. The online format proposed for this program will provide maximum access to occupational therapists that would be otherwise unable to attend an on-campus program and would be accessible to students who may not be physically located within our geographic service area.

The content of this degree program focuses on enhancing leadership skills and advancing skills in advocacy, program and policy development, education, research, and clinical skills beyond entry-level practice to meet the complex needs of society. The proposed program will consist of three components: 1) core courses, 2) elective courses in areas of interest, and 3) a capstone experience tailored to the individual needs and interests of the student. The proposed DrOT degree will require a minimum of 36 credits beyond a master's

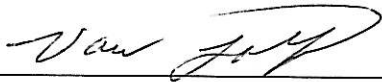
degree in occupational therapy. The program will have three routes of entry: 1) occupational therapists with a master's degree in occupational therapy who will need to complete 36 credits of core courses and electives; 2) occupational therapists with a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy and a master's degree in a related field who will be able to transfer up to 18 credits; and 3) occupational therapists with a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy who will need to complete an additional 24 credits, which will include pre-requisites and additional electives. The University of Michigan-Flint has extensive experience in distance education with our other accredited programs such as Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree (DNP), Registered Nurse (RN) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees with the support of the Office of Extended Learning.

Several extensive surveys have been conducted as well as focus groups, including one at the University of Michigan Hospital who employs more than 70 occupational therapists, to explore the need and desire of doctoral degree options in occupational therapy. Of the survey and focus group participants, as high as 75% indicated a strong desire to enroll in a DrOT program. Along with meeting an important need, anticipated enrollment will further enhance the growing number of graduate programs and graduate students at the University of Michigan-Flint.

The proposed Doctor of Occupational Therapy (DrOT) degree has been thoroughly reviewed and supported by the UM-Flint Department of Health Sciences and Administration, School of Health Professions and Studies, Graduate Programs Committee, Academic Affairs Advisory Committee, Chancellor's Advisory Committee for Budget and Strategic Planning, Academic Assessment Committee, the provost and chancellor. The program will be implemented upon approval from the Presidents Council of State Universities of Michigan, the Higher Learning Commission, and pending the Board of Regents approval.

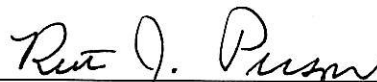
Based upon the extensive research and plans that have been completed, the University of Michigan-Flint requests approval to grant the Doctor of Occupational Therapy Degree (DrOT) through the School of Health Professions and Studies at the University of Michigan-Flint, effective January 1, 2011.

Recommended by:



Vahid Lotfi, Interim Provost and
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Recommendation endorsed by:



Ruth J. Person, Chancellor
University of Michigan-Flint

May 2010