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Date: July 29, 2003
Contact: Michael Hopkins
Phone: (708) 534-7090
Fax: (708) 534-8399
Email: m-hopkins@govst.edu

For Immediate Release

Paradox Lost: Bridging Gap to the Masters in Occupational Therapy

University Park, July 29, 2003—Occupational therapists have the best of both worlds: they work in a rewarding profession that truly makes a difference in the lives of everyday people, and they have a secure professional future, with above-average employment opportunities projected through the year 2010 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

But it is a field with a preparation paradox. In 2002, the entry-level professional degree was raised from the bachelor's Degree in Occupational Therapy to the master's in Occupational Therapy (M.O.T.). Bachelor's programs were largely discontinued as a result, leaving preparation for Certified Occupational Therapists intact at the associate degree level, but creating a gap in available preparation for those wishing to enter the graduate and professional level of study.

Governors State University has bridged that gap.

"Of course, students can apply to the M.O.T. program with bachelor's degrees outside of occupational therapy," explained Occupational Therapy Professor Catherine Brady,"but since the occupational therapy bachelor's programs are gone or being phased out, there is a level of prerequisite preparation that often means classes beyond the bachelor's degree. We've solved that problem."

Working in conjunction with area community colleges, Governors State University's Board of Governors degree program, the College of Health Professions, and the Occupational Therapy program have created a tailor-made degree option for Board of Governors students who want to apply to the M.O.T. program upon earning their bachelor's degrees. This BOG degree allows undergraduate students to meet the M.O.T. prerequisites while they earn their bachelor's degrees.

How does it work?

The Board of Governors Degree is a Bachelor of Arts degree, but rather than being constrained within a single discipline, it allows for liberal studies. This provides the opportunity for M.O.T. advisors to work with the BOG advisors and students. Together, they create study plans that will bring the students to their bachelor's degree with the M.O.T. prerequisites in the natural sciences and social sciences already met. Additional coursework can be avoided, and the path to the M.O.T. is streamlined.

This dual advising and BOG option works in tandem with community colleges to help Certified Occupation Therapist Assistants (COTA) preplan their transitions into the BOG and, ultimately, the M.O.T., should they decide to move from the A.A.S. in Occupational Therapy Assistant to the graduate level. Additionally, the Board of Governors advisors can assess applicants who are outside the field and determine if M.O.T. is a desirable career path for those applicants. If it is, the BOG will work with the M.O.T. program and create the most effective study plan for the students.

"We want to help people make it to their end goals," Brady said."We've done that here by closing the gap in preparation."