

PROFILE OF ACCEPTED STUDENTS

While every accredited occupational therapy program meets the same accreditation standards, each program is unique in its mission, vision and curriculum design. The UNC program emphasizes occupational science as the underlying academic discipline supporting occupational therapy practice. From that base, we educate students to ground their practice in a solid understanding of occupation, humans as occupational beings, and the use of occupation as a medium of change. We strive to prepare occupational therapists who will thrive in a rigorous academic environment, carry that scholarly approach into their clinical practice, and take on the challenge of helping to shape occupation-centered practice in traditional and emerging practice areas. We are looking for applicants who already demonstrate commitment to learning, scholarship, and human service and who are open to change within occupational therapy.

Generally, we look for applicants with a blend of academic ability, experience working with people, and an understanding of occupational therapy. As with any health care field, multi-cultural experience is a prerequisite to being an effective practitioner. The admissions committee reviews all of the completed applications and attempts to ensure class diversity in multiple ways.

Undergraduate Degrees & Academic Preparedness

Our successful applicants have undergraduate degrees in many different fields including psychology, sociology, anthropology, biology, exercise science, languages, art, music, architecture, and education, to name a few. Academically, the average undergraduate GPA is typically above 3.5 and GRE scores are typically around the 60th percentile for the quantitative section and the 70th percentile for the verbal section. GRE writing scores are generally 4 or higher. Some of our admitted applicants are still completing their undergraduate degrees during the application process and start their Graduate Studies shortly after their graduation. Other applicants have worked for two or more years and complete any prerequisites that were not part of their undergraduate degree before entering Graduate School in the fall. In each class, there usually are one or more students with partners and children who successfully balance academics with family obligations.

Experiences in Occupational Therapy

We do not require a specific quantity of volunteer experience in occupational therapy but do value applicants who have thoroughly investigated the profession and the variety of ways occupational therapists work with people.

In developing a solid understanding of practice, witnessing a variety of settings is perhaps more important than the number of hours. Most of our accepted applicants demonstrate this by observing occupational therapy as it is provided for people of a variety of ages and with a range of problems (developmental, psychosocial, and physical disabilities) and in a variety of practice settings including medical models of practice, educational models and community-based programs.

Our most successful applicants move beyond traditional hospital based settings to visit therapists who provide services in the schools, communities or the person's home. The typical accepted applicant over the years 2004-2009 had visited an average of 4-6 different types of sites, spending significant amounts of time in 1 or 2 and observing for multiple hours in the others.

Experiences with Diversity

The ability to enthusiastically work with people from a variety of different walks of life is essential for effective occupational therapy. Our admitted applicants' backgrounds have differed from the people with whom they have worked with in a variety of ways. These differences included working with people who had disabilities, individuals of different ages, or people of varied racial, ethnic, cultural, spiritual, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Among our admitted applicants, all have spent a significant amount of time working with people who were different from themselves. There are a number of ways admitted applicants acquired experiences with diversity. For example:

- Some were employed as life skills trainers, mental health aids or teacher's aids.
- Successful applicants who did not have experience with diversity in the workplace typically had volunteer experience such as working as camp counselors, attendants in shelters for the homeless, or assistants for special activities in nursing homes (these are just some examples).
- Other applicants had first-hand experience from living in a culture that was different from their own or are members of a minority group themselves.
- Some successful applicants also found these experiences closer to home as the primary caregiver for a family member with a disability.

Scholarly Writing

In addition to their experiences, all of our admitted students are able to communicate their knowledge of occupational therapy in a scholarly manner and demonstrate an appreciation for the philosophy behind the profession in their application essays. Successful applicants are also able to write reflectively and analytically about their experiences in learning an occupation and about their experiences with diversity.

Profile of Accepted Students 2015-2020

These data represent the averages for students accepted to the M.S. program in OT from 2015-2020 (Classes of 2017-2022).

AVERAGE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS PER YEAR: 230

NUMBER OF APPLICANTS ACCEPTED EACH YEAR: 24

NUMBER OF APPLICANTS WAITLISTED EACH YEAR: approximately 8

AVERAGE NUMBER OF WAITLISTED APPLICANTS

EVENTUALLY ADMITTED INTO THE PROGRAM: approximately 6

AVERAGE GPA OF ACCEPTED APPLICANTS: 3.6

DIVERSITY

Percentage of out of state students: 23%

Percent ethnically diverse (self-identified): 20%

Percent identifying as male: 10%

Over age 30: 8%

Student Outcomes

- The total number of graduates from our occupational therapy program during the three-year period from 2018-2020 (classes of 2018-2020) was 70, with an overall graduation rate of 97 %.
- 95 % of students graduating from the program pass the national certification exam the first time they take it.
- Graduates report satisfactory job searches after graduation, indicating that when they were ready to begin working as an occupational therapist, they were able to find a suitable position.