

Student Recruitment Initiatives Contest

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Plan Description

Our plan to recruit new students to our occupational therapy (OT) program involves hosting OT information sessions at local universities and other facilities. At least two second-year students from this master's-level program would set up an occupational therapy information booth in a highly visible area, such as outside of a cafeteria or in a quadrangle. These students would function as representatives of our program and hand out flyers or fact sheets describing the field of occupational therapy. We could invite students to our booth with the slogan "Explore the art of living—learn about occupational therapy." Rather than simply explaining what OTs do and what we mean by "occupations," we would attempt to educate others about our profession in an interactive manner. For example, we could have contests where we ask a group of interested observers what they think an occupational therapist does or how they think occupational therapy differs from physical therapy. The person with the most accurate answer as judged by our representatives would win a small door prize (possibly an OT t-shirt, mug, etc.) and then one of the program's current students would elaborate upon the winner's response and make sure that everyone present has a clear understanding of the answer. Key principles of occupational therapy (e.g., our goal of restoring independence to clients, the use of a holistic approach, etc.) would be discussed and the students would answer any questions that passers-by may have. We could also demonstrate tests that OTs routinely perform in clinics, such as range of motion and grip strength measurements. By using this interactive approach, we could advance the "undiscovered" field of occupational therapy and pique the interest of students who are undecided regarding career choices or programs of study.

An easy way to advertise for this program would be to post flyers on the respective campus or other site where the session will take place. This could be done one to two weeks prior to the actual session. Also, by sending an e-mail explaining our plan to the dean of a specific major or department, we could have the host university/college itself invite its student body to attend. In this way, we could target students classified as "undecided," "general studies," "pre-medicine," or "pre-allied health," in an effort to help them focus on a potential career path. It would be best to aim this program at students who are at a lower level (either freshmen or sophomores) in their undergraduate degree programs. This would allow prospective applicants plenty of time to take all of the prerequisites needed to apply to Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC).

The Department of Occupational Therapy currently holds faculty-run information sessions roughly once a month. While these sessions were formerly offered at the University of New Orleans, most of them are now given on the occupational therapy floor at LSUHSC. Holding the sessions away from the home campuses of prospective applicants may stop them from even attending. It would be much more convenient to interested students if they could learn about our program while walking to and from their classes. Also, having master's-level students run the sessions would give greater insight into what LSUHSC occupational therapy is all about. Prospective applicants may feel

more at ease discussing their concerns or questions with current students than with faculty members.

Effectiveness of Plan

The most direct way to measure the efficacy of this plan would be to record the number of applications received from students who attended at least one of the information sessions. If our mission were simply to increase public awareness of OT, then it would suffice to say that large numbers of attendance at information sessions would equate success. However, the task at hand is *student recruitment*, so the amount of applications received is a more relevant measure of efficacy.

Cost of Plan

This is a very inexpensive way to recruit new students. Our OT department already can provide the necessary table(s) and chairs. Student volunteers could make a simple, colorful banner on computer paper or posterboard to use as decoration. The average cost of a t-shirt to be used as a door prize is \$12, and we could purchase small plastic goniometers (reusable or even disposable) for next to nothing. The only other fee that would need to be considered is payment for the booth. At some career fairs and similar events space must be purchased in order for a school to advertise. Sometimes, this fee is waived and the space is totally free. Overall, this is a very economical and easy initiative that we can use to recruit new students.