American Occupational Therapy Association

Fall 2026 ALC Doctoral Capstone Coordinator Breakout

Quality, Innovation, and the Future of Doctoral Capstone Education

Theresa Delbert, OTD, OTR/L
ALC Doctoral Capstone Coordinator Chairperson
October 22, 2026

Academic Leadership Councils



OT-ALC

Occupational Therapy

Chair: Anne Kiraly-Alvarez, OTD, OTR/L

Members: Deans, Chairs and Program Directors of academic programs for the occupational therapist.



OTA-ALC

Occupational Therapy Assistant

Chair: Vicky Vu, OTD, OTR/L, MBA, BCP

Members: Deans, Chairs and Program Directors of academic programs for the occupational therapy assistant.



AFWC-ALC

Academic Fieldwork Coordinators

Chair: Kathryn Sorensen, OTD, OTR/L, ADAC

Members: Academic Fieldwork Coordinators of academic programs for the occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant.



DCC-ALC

Doctoral Capstone Coordinators

Chair: Theresa Delbert, OTD, OTR/L

Members: Doctoral Capstone Coordinators of doctoral level academic programs for the occupational therapist.

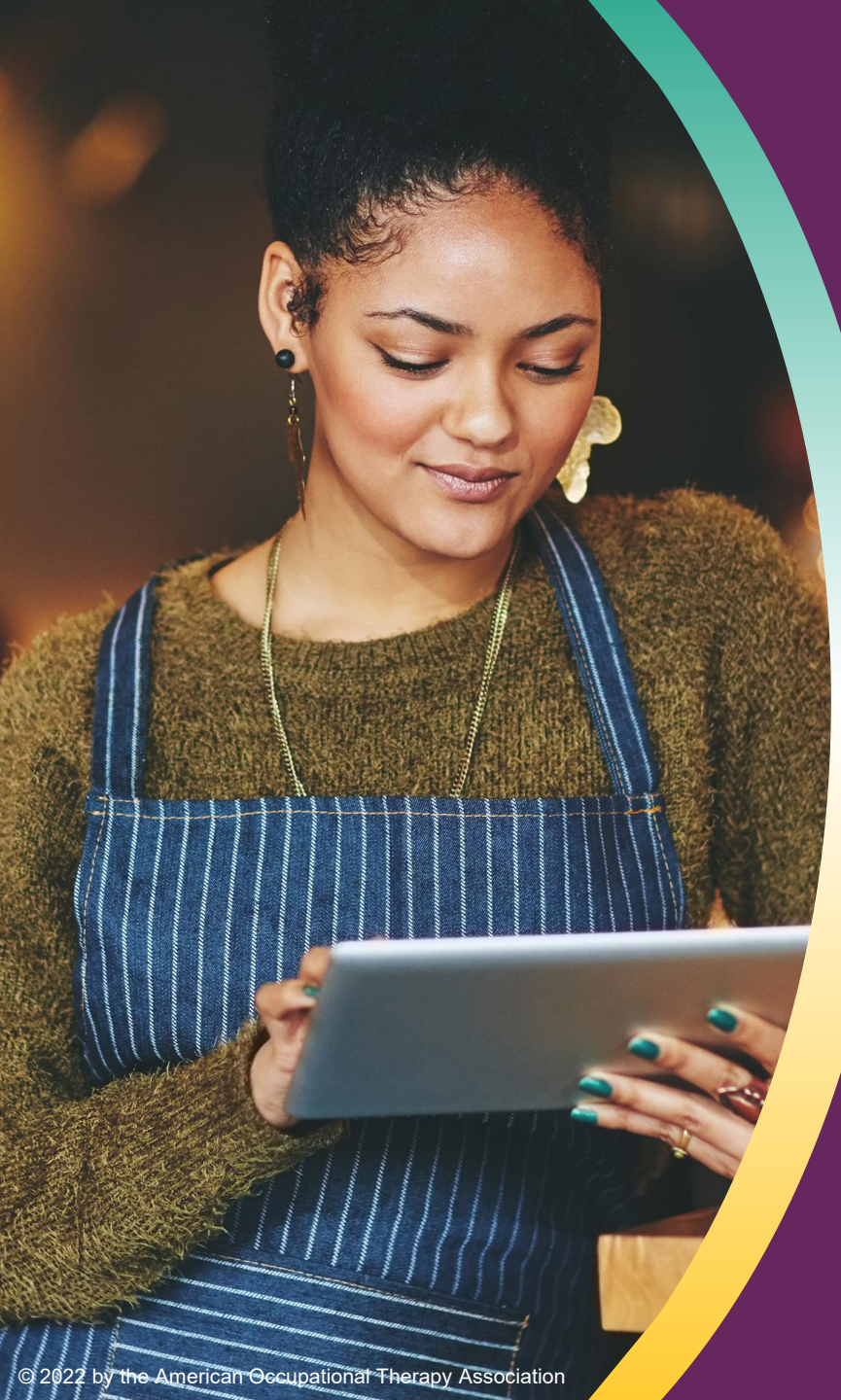
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Fall 2026 DCC Breakout

Welcome, Doctoral Capstone Coordinators!

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Today's Focus

Quality, Innovation, and the Future of Doctoral Capstone Education

Evaluate capstone quality	Strategies programs use to evaluate capstone quality, outcomes, and impact
Use data to improve	Assessment and program evaluation data for continuous improvement and accreditation
Navigate AI	Opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence in doctoral capstone education
Adapt innovations	Innovative practices and initiatives to strengthen capstone in your own program
Collaborate on scholarship	Opportunities through the Doctoral Capstone Research Agenda

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Agenda

Thursday, October 22, 2026 | All times Eastern (ET)

11:00–11:10		**Welcome and Introductions**
11:10–11:55		**Panel #1: AI, Academic Integrity, and the Future of Capstone**
11:55–12:05		**Break (10 minutes)**
12:05–1:05		**Innovation Showcase**
1:05–1:15		**Break (10 minutes)**
1:15–2:00		**Panel #2: Capstone Quality: How Do We Know It Is Working?**
2:00–2:25		**DCC Research Agenda Groups**
2:25–2:30		**Closing Remarks**

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AI, Academic Integrity, and the Future of Capstone

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Panelists

AI, Academic Integrity, and the Future of Capstone



FACILITATOR

Christine Kroll, OTD, OTR, FAOTA

University of Indianapolis



PANELIST

Alina Fifer, Chief Executive Officer

Brazos Valley Rehabilitation Center



PANELIST

Sam Colby, OTD, OTR/L

Brazos Valley Rehabilitation Center



PANELIST

Gina Pifer, EdD, OTR/L, BCPR

University of Missouri

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DCC Reflections

AI and the future of capstone

1. Where does your program currently draw the line on AI use in the capstone?
2. How are you teaching students to use AI ethically, transparently, and critically?
3. What policies, assignments, or mentoring conversations may need updating?
4. How can capstone prepare students for an AI-enabled healthcare environment?

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Innovation Showcase

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Innovation Showcase Presenters

Creative approaches from across our programs • presenters will share their screens

1

Tripta Velamoor



2

Jen Summers



3

Jessie Bricker



4

Renée Rains



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Capstone Quality:
How Do We Know It Is Working?

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Panelists

Capstone Quality: How Do We Know It Is Working?



PANELIST

Holly Grieves, OTD, OTRL

Western Michigan University



PANELIST

Ginny Green, OTD, OTR/L, LRC

St. Catherine University
St. Paul, Minnesota



PANELIST

Dan Rortvedt, OTD, OTR/L, ATP

University of Wisconsin–Madison

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DCC Reflections

Capstone quality, outcomes, and impact

1. How does your program currently define — and communicate — a “quality” capstone?
2. Which outcome data do you collect, and which do you actually use to make decisions?
3. Where could capstone data better support continuous improvement and accreditation?
4. What is one measure you could add, refine, or retire this year?

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DCC Research Agenda Groups

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Our Journey So Far

Doctoral Capstone Research Agenda Work Groups

1

Fall 2025

Work groups launched at ALC

2

Nov 2025

Applications closed; groups formed

3

Jan 2026

Groups began meeting

4

2026

Quarterly guided check-ins

5

Today

Group updates

6

Next

Posters, presentations & manuscripts

Goal: collaborative, multi-site scholarship that shows why the doctoral capstone matters — and what it produces.

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Group Updates

Each group will briefly share:



Focus

Research Agenda category and research question



Progress

What the group has accomplished so far



Next steps

Plans and target products for the coming year



Ways to help

Data, sites, or collaborators the group is looking for

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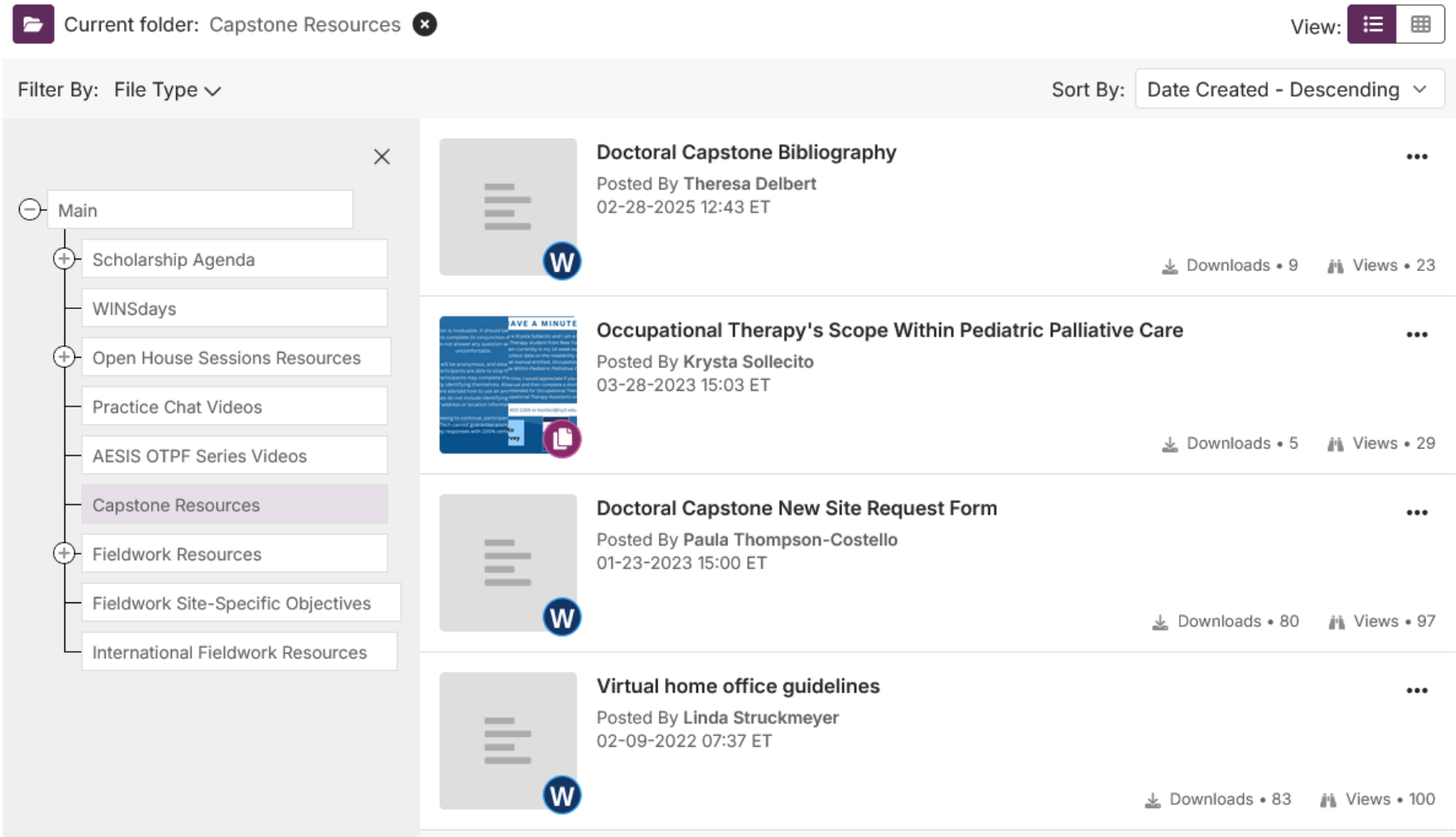
Appendix B. Research Categories, Major Research Goals, and Sample Research Questions in the Occupational Therapy Doctoral Capstone Research Agenda

Research Category	Major Research Goals	Sample Research Questions
Teaching and learning	▪ Identify, evaluate the implementation of, test the effectiveness of, and analyze the heutagogy appropriate for the doctoral capstone (i.e., backward design) ▪ Identify best practices in instructional methods of the capstone process ▪ Identify the impact and influence of doctoral-level training on occupational therapy education teaching and learning practices	▪ What curriculum designs (or methods, or instructional processes) best support successful capstones? ▪ What heutagogy/andragogy best supports successful capstones? ▪ What constitutes effective heutagogy/andragogy for the capstone (i.e., assessment)?
Learner characteristics and competencies	▪ Identify characteristics that are needed for success across the doctoral capstone (i.e., self-directed learning) ▪ Identify specific skill development and added value resulting from each doctoral capstone category (i.e., program development, research, education) ▪ Identify supports for and barriers to collaborations among students and mentors, academic mentors, and students ▪ Create and assess evaluative tools for measurements of doctoral capstone outcomes	▪ What learner characteristics or needs relate to student success in the capstone? ▪ What is the longitudinal impact of mentorship on student performance, knowledge, or skills, from student to entry-level practitioner and beyond? ▪ What supports (to sites, to students, to mentors) are needed for student success in the capstone? ▪ What evaluative tools for measurement are needed for programs to understand the impact and value of the doctoral capstone?

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CommunOT Capstone Resources for DCCs

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Doctoral Capstone Bibliography

- If you have journal articles specific to the entry-level OT Doctoral Capstone that you'd like to have included on the Doctoral Capstone Bibliography, please send the citation to: delbert@hanover.edu

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Thank You

Together, we are shaping the future of doctoral capstone education

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Questions?



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