

## Overview of the Roles and Responsibilities of the Program Director

The Program Director (PD) is the leader of an occupational therapy (OT) or occupational therapy assistant (OTA) program that is required for candidacy and full accreditation.

According to ACOTE (2023) Standard A.2.1:

- The primary role of the PD is to manage and administer the program, which includes planning, evaluating, budgeting, selecting faculty and staff, maintaining accreditation, and being committed to strategies for professional development.
- The qualifications necessary to hold the role of PD include the following:
  - Designation as a full-time faculty member who is appointed to the OT degree level program and is responsible for directing the program.
  - Initial certification as an occupational therapist (OT program) or occupational therapy assistant (OTA program) who is licensed or otherwise regulated according to regulations in the state(s) or jurisdiction(s) in which the program is located.
  - Holds the appropriate level degree awarded by an institution that is accredited by a USDE-recognized institutional accrediting agency.
  - has documented experience in OT that includes clinical practice, administrative experience, scholarship, understanding the role of an OTA, and years of experience as a faculty member with teaching responsibilities at the appropriate level determined by degree offered by the institution.
- The PD must have **sufficient release time** to ensure that the needs of the program are being met.

This position may be best met as a faculty member available during all 12 months of the year should that match the program's curricular design.

The PD may become a voting member of the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) Academic Leadership Council (ALC). To become a voting member of the ALC, the PD must be a member of AOTA. A PD does not need to be a voting member to attend ALC meetings. The ALC meets twice a year in the spring and fall, where ideas are shared, current issues are discussed, and opportunities are offered to stay current on educational practices.

This document is meant to provide administrators with things to consider when creating workload for PDs. Responsibilities may vary depending on whether the academic institution offers degrees at the associate, baccalaureate, masters or doctoral entry-level, is public or private, and whether the institution requires high

levels of research and/or teaching, which is typically based on the institution's Carnegie Classification (e.g., Very High Research, High Research, etc.).

**Essential Skills and Functions of the PD include (but not limited to) the following:**

- **Leadership Skills**

- Demonstrates ability to implement various leadership frameworks needed for the complexities faced with PD duties, e.g., structural, human resource, political, symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 2017).
- Demonstrates the ability to be a visionary and forward thinker to address the changing demands faced by profession and education.
- Experience with strategic planning.
- Demonstrates advocacy skills needed for daily practice, professional issues, systems level issues (Hart, 2019).
- Models' professional behavior.
- Interact with community partners and advocates for program, faculty, staff, students, and profession.
- Understands the chain of commands in terms of how decisions are made (e.g., institutional system, higher administration at the institution, the Dean's office, etc.).
- Understands and effectively utilizes group dynamics principles to foster a collaborative process and environment.
- Fosters an inclusive environment for faculty, staff, students, prospective students, and program guests.

- **Managerial and High-Level Administrative Skills**

- **General**

- Demonstrates effective written and oral communication skills.
- Collaborate with other programs and PDs, inside and outside the institution, including fostering inter and intraprofessional collaboration among faculty, staff, and students.
- Demonstrates good networking skills – in community and profession.
- Demonstrates effective conflict management and resolution skills.
- Oversees faculty/staff hires, position requests, and searches within the program.
- May participate in the promotion and tenure process for the program faculty.

- **Program**

- Demonstrates ability to develop and oversee budgets to support programs, faculty, staff, and students.
- Demonstrates ability to oversee ACOTE Accreditation Process and Compliance
- Understands Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship and sets program scholarship agenda in collaboration with faculty.
- Demonstrates excellent time management skills.
- Demonstrates excellent stress management skills.

- Advocates and is responsible for the program, faculty, and staff.
- Manages and train part-time instructors/adjuncts.
- Delegates tasks appropriately to other faculty, staff, or students
- Oversees and manages admissions policies and procedures.
- Oversees alumni relations.
- Oversees fundraising to support program, faculty, and students.
- Oversees marketing for the program.
- Oversees semester schedules and teaching assignments as needed.
- Oversees curriculum to assure compliance with ACOTE standards and alliance with the institution's mission, vision, and goals.
  - Displays strong understanding of and ability to articulate curriculum design.
  - Collaborates with faculty to assure that the program is in compliance with ACOTE standards.
  - Leads and coordinates program assessment and program review.
  - Experienced educator with strong teaching skills.
  - Stays current with scholarship of teaching.
- Aware of resources to support faculty, staff, and students
- **Students**
  - Manages complex student issues in collaboration with faculty and staff.
  - Provides effective supervision and mentoring of students.
    - Develop guidelines to clarify expectations for professional behavior and academic performance.
    - Manages student disciplinary actions and procedures in collaboration with faculty.
    - Manage student retention initiatives.
  - Experience with mentoring, advising, and supervising students.
    - Oversees and manages advising policies and procedures, which may include communication with students, program advisors, registrar's office, institutional advisors, maintenance of files, updating advising materials, etc.
    - Bridges gap between students and faculty
    - Assures compliance with graduation requirements
    - Informs students about the NBCOT exam and state licensure. In some situations, they may coordinate and oversee student NBCOT exam preparation.
    - Oversees complex student issues to promote success.
    - Oversees development of and adherence to guidelines and policies regarding conduct, successful progression through program, disciplinary procedures
  - Experience in advising and recruitment of prospective students.
    - Develops recruitment materials and attends recruitment events in collaboration with faculty and institution.

- Oversees program website and university catalog materials assuring compliance with ACOTE requirements.
- Oversees advising procedures for prospective students.
- Oversees admissions process.
- **Faculty and Staff**
  - Understands the roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff.
  - Mentors faculty for successful professional development, promotion, and tenure (if applicable)
  - Develops and implements guidelines to clarify expectations for teaching, scholarship, service, and administrative duties in accordance with institutional standards.
  - Promotes activities that support faculty success and retention.
  - May manage faculty disciplinary actions and procedures, complaints against faculty or program, student grade disputes, etc. as appropriate within the institutional structure.

#### **For PDs of Research-Intensive Programs:**

- Understands the IRB process for human subject's research.
- Understands the external funding process as appropriate to institutional practices.
- Understands the dissemination process, including professional presentations and various forms and levels of publication.
- Mentors and supports faculty as they pursue their research and research agenda.
- May oversee complex multi-division programs with multiple missions related to clinical practice, research, and/or teaching.

#### **References**

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