



March 13, 2020

Dr. Philip J. Schubert
President
Abilene Christian University
206 Hardin Administration Building
ACU Box 29100
Abilene, TX 79699-9100

Dear Dr. Schubert:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:

**Significant Departure Program
Doctor in Occupational Therapy (O.T.D.)**

Submission date:

11/25/2019

Implementation date:

8/2/2021

Case ID:

SC008283

Abilene Christian University (ACU) plans to implement the entry-level Doctor of Occupational Therapy (O.T.D.) degree program. The prospectus notes that since the O.T.D. program will be ACU's fourth doctoral program, it will provide SACSCOC with a request to change the institution's status from a Level V to a Level VI institution when the degree program is implemented.

The new doctoral program is the logical next step beyond the currently approved Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) accredited Master of Occupational Therapy (MSOT) degree program. The program supports the mission of ACU *to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world*. In addition, the mission of the O.T.D. program is to prepare occupational therapy students to think and act critically, missionally, and globally through Christian service as specialized occupational therapy professionals and leaders throughout their respective communities. Based on the need for the program as documented by Bureau of Labor Statistics data, disciplinary benchmarks in the state, and job placement data, the program aligns with the ACU mission and will provide a valuable resource for training professionals in the healthcare industry.



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The target audience is those persons seeking to advance their careers in occupational therapy beyond generalist practices and to expand their options for leadership in the profession. Graduates will be eligible to sit for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) to be licensed as Occupational Therapists. Like the master's program, the institution will seek accreditation from the ACOTE. Anticipated enrollment is a cohort of 10 students a year for the next five years. The program will be offered in the traditional format on the ACU campus. Development and approval for the program followed the established faculty and administrative processes. Based on the very successful MSOT graduation rates (98%), NBCOT pass rates (100%), and job placement rates (100%), ACU believes it has the necessary resources to add the O.T.D. program.

The program requires completion of 85 credit hours in 31 courses spread over two and one-half years. The curriculum includes two 12-week fieldwork education rotations and a 14-week doctoral capstone experience. The capstone consists of two parts: the capstone project and an individual 14-week capstone experience in the student's chosen area of specialization to facilitate implementation of the doctoral project. The degree program will provide students the opportunity to practice as occupational therapists and to gain additional in-depth knowledge in practice skills, research skills, administration leadership, program and policy development, advocacy, education and theory.

A course schedule and descriptions for the O.T.D. program were provided. The O.T.D. curriculum has one program goal and four student learning outcomes related to competent practice, critical thinking, lifelong learning, and identification as a healthcare professional. The assessment matrix lists six column headings for program evaluation: program outcome, artifact, competency target, ideal target, person responsible, and timelines. Methods of assessment and target measures for success were included in the matrix. Admission and graduation requirements were described. Administrative oversight will be provided by the O.T.D. Program Director who reports to the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services.

Two qualified full-time faculty members who currently teach in the MSOT program will teach in the O.T.D. program. One, the Program Director, holds the M.A. in Occupational Therapy and the Ph.D. in Motor Control and Learning. The second holds the M.S. in Clinical Practice Management and the O.T.D., Post-Professional Occupational Therapy Doctorate. A third current position is open and will be filled in June of 2020 with a person holding the Ph.D., Ed.D., or OTC (per ACOTE standards). Two faculty members teaching in the MSOT program are currently completing graduate Ed.D. programs but will not teach in the O.T.D. program until their doctorates are completed. Two part-time faculty members will also teach one course each in the curriculum. One holds the Ph.D. in Clinical Neuropsychology (teaching neuroscience) and the second holds the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (teaching musculoskeletal anatomy). All



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faculty members are licensed occupational therapists. All appear to be qualified to teach the coursework assigned. The institution plans to employ two new faculty members in fall 2021, and one, an O.T.D. Project Manager (capstone coordinator), in fall 2023. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC accreditation review.

Library and learning resources appear to be adequate for the program. Standard library resources include adequate library staff, print and electronic materials, computer equipment, instructional services, and library consortia agreements. The ACU librarians have developed a Library Guide to Occupational Therapy that describes the discipline-specific library and learning resources for the new program. Students will be provided a laptop computer to enhance their access to the electronic research materials available.

Student support services also appear to be adequate. Along with standard support services provided to all students, graduate residential students have access to the Career Center, Chaplin's Office, Title IX Office, Multicultural Enrichment, Student Recreation and Wellness Center, Graduate Student Association, Team 55 technical support, and Wildcat Care, an online health care benefit that provides access to medical care.

Physical resources appear to be adequate for the new program. ACU currently has two large dedicated spaces in the Health Science Learning Center totaling approximately 4,000 square feet of space that are used for both lab and classroom space. Another available nearby facility is being renovated to provide additional space for O.T.D. student use. Other classroom spaces and faculty offices are available for the program. Approximately \$75,000 has been set aside to construct and equip an additional suite of offices. A four-page listing of the equipment available for the individual courses in the program was provided.

The pro-forma budget anticipates a negative cash flow in the first year of the program because of new faculty and renovation start-up costs. However, the budget anticipates a positive cash flow in year two of the program with incremental increases in revenue in year's three through five. To assist with start-up costs, the Hendrick Health System will provide \$100,000 for construction renovation, furniture, and a portion of the lab equipment for the new space described above.

All academic programs at ACU are required to conduct an annual outcomes assessment review and provide those findings to the dean of their respective college or school. The assessment report includes mission statements, SLOs, assessment measures with targeted goals, posting of analyzed data, and program plans for continuous quality improvement. Data and reports are retained in TaskStream, the assessment database used by ACU. As noted previously, the O.T.D.



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program has a developed assessment matrix, and this matrix will be used in the faculty evaluation and O.T.D. Director's reporting of learning outcomes in the O.T.D. program.

Policy Change

At its meeting in June 2018, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approved modification of the *Substantive Change Policy for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions* for any type of substantive change requiring approval. If an approved substantive change has not been implemented within two years of action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the institution will need to submit a new prospectus for the change or application for a level change.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (O.T.D.) degree program. It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of the current accreditation.

Enclosed is an invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of reviewing the prospectus.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. Michael T. Hoefer at 404-679-4501 or via email at mhoefer@sacscoc.org.

Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.

President

BSW/LCS:lp

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Chris Riley J.D., Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Instructor of Political Science

Dr. Michael T. Hoefer