

The Dawn of a New Era

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As the profession of Occupational Therapy nears the century mark and the next millennium approaches, the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy is preparing for a new era of achievement. The Center for Occupation and Lifestyle Redesign—an innovative program to advance education, research, and community-based practice—embodies this future. Plans are now underway to renovate a three-story 19th-century Victorian building near USC's University Park Campus to bring this vision to reality. Yet with construction, furnishings, and technology costs totaling more than \$1.5 million dollars, an ambitious fundraising campaign is underway to garner the support needed to complete the center and endow it for posterity.

Two lead gifts of \$100,000 each were provided by esteemed alumna Carlotta Welles, MA, OTR, FAOTA, and by distinguished alum, Richard McCauley, MA, OT, FAOTA, who made his gift with his partner Clayton Brown. Seed money such as this is critical to the development of any new department venture, since tuition and grant dollars are always earmarked for existing educational and research commitments. Additional external funds for the project are still being sought.

The concept for the USC center is patterned in part on George Barton's seminal OT center, the 1914 Consolation House. This contemporary version will recreate some aspects of early settlement houses, providing educational instruction in an activity rich environment benefiting students, researchers, and clients from the community. In addition, the center's activities will span the age of craft to the age of computers by mixing traditional crafts with the latest in technological advancements, including cutting-edge developments in adaptive technology and a computer laboratory with Internet and teleconferencing capabilities.

Encompassing classroom, research, and laboratory space, the Center will provide a central site for research into how time and technology are altering the occupational landscape of people's daily lives. "No one has adequately addressed how the changes ushered in by modern society affect us physically, psychologically, and spiritually," says department chair Florence Clark.

"While technology greatly expands our access to information, it also serves to support a more sedentary lifestyle. We want to thoroughly study how de-emphasizing health-inducing activities—chunks of time spent walking, preparing meals, or socializing that are now replaced by watching television or surfing the Internet—impacts a population. We need to discover how lifestyle redesign can enable people to experience greater levels of health and life satisfaction within the realities of modern society."

The prominent location of the center at Hoover and 27th street—only four blocks from the University Park Campus (UPC)—provides the department with unprecedented visibility at UPC. It also gives students and faculty greater access to disciplines housed there—such as psychology, social work, and gerontology—and provides a base for interdisciplinary research and practice activities. OT's Faculty Practice will maintain an office at the center in order to coordinate community-based occupational therapy services to individual clients and social service agencies in the neighborhood. In addition, the proximity of the center to the Occupational Therapy House will support a unique educational model where students can study and practice in the area in which they live.

In addition to interdisciplinary research and on-site occupational therapy, center activities will include professional colloquiums and distance learning outreach to occupational therapists and

scientists around the world. Vintage arts and crafts—weaving, pottery, stained glass, painting, woodworking, and gardening—will allow students and neighborhood clients to witness the power of occupation in promoting health, happiness, and wellbeing. And a small museum will highlight the origin of occupational therapy, further raising the profile of OS/OT on campus and within the community.

While construction plans for the 6,000 sq. ft. building are being finalized, the department is aiming to involve hundreds of alumni in this project before this year's Commencement Ceremony on May 14, 1999. Five hundred gifts and pledges are being sought prior to groundbreaking. Such backing will secure the future of this unprecedented entity and underscore for posterity the breadth of support for establishing such a prominent site for research, study, and practice in the arenas of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. Additionally, a generous leadership gift would entitle a donor to name the center in perpetuity. With the backing of our friends and alumni, The Center for Occupation and Lifestyle Redesign will open its doors in late 1999.