



February 10, 2015


Dr. Erlinda J. Martinez
President, Santa Ana College
1530 West 17th St.
Santa Ana, CA 92706


Dear Dr. Martinez,

The Occupational Therapy Department of Samuel Merritt University (SMU) is pleased to write this letter in support of Santa Ana College's proposed baccalaureate degree in Occupational Therapy Studies. Santa Ana College continues to host a highly successful Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program, accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. The proposed B.S. degree features more in-depth training and research-based evidence for best practices in the field and will provide a solid foundation for practitioners seeking to transition into graduate-level course work in Occupational Therapy.

SMU is located in Oakland CA, offering an entry-level Master of Occupational Therapy program to the community and successfully preparing approximately 38 licensed occupational therapists (OTR) a year. Our graduates are employed throughout California and often partner with certified occupational therapy assistants (COTAs) to serve the public. This professional partnership is critical in delivering quality services to the clients. The current trend of increasing demands of evidence-based practice in OT from the public has further propelled our program to move to an entry doctoral level program. The doctoral level education will emphasize not only current best practices but also research and development of new knowledge and innovative services to improve the health and well-being of people across the life span. Being a professional partner to OT programs, the OTA programs will logically be expected to progress toward a higher level of academic preparation; therefore, a baccalaureate degree in OT study should better prepare OTA students to meet the continuous challenges in health care and in the field of OT. Furthermore, a baccalaureate degree will qualify the OTA graduates to apply to OT programs to advance their professional career opportunities.

In supporting Santa Ana College's proposal, we acknowledge that the baccalaureate degree in Occupational Studies would increase the breadth and depth in all areas of clinical training of OTA Students and COTA staff including: Specific clinical practice techniques, healthcare ethics, cultural competency, application of research-based evidence, documentation, and professional growth. SMU will continue to work with Santa Ana College and the current Occupational Therapy Assistant program as well as proposed the Occupational Therapy Studies baccalaureate degree program.


Kate Hayner, EdD, OTR/L
Associate Professor and Chair


Chi-Kwan Shea, PhD, OTR/L
Associate Professor