

DEPARTMENT of OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

NEWSLETTER



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Hello from the UNE OT Program,

As I reflect on the many achievements highlighted in this newsletter, I am filled with pride for our entire Occupational Therapy community. From student and faculty accomplishments to alumni leadership and service, this edition showcases the incredible impact the UNE OT program continues to have across Maine, the nation, and beyond. Every milestone represents the dedication, innovation, and commitment to excellence that defines our program and the profession we serve. Thank you for the countless ways you continue to advance occupational therapy and support the UNE OT community. As we look ahead, I am excited for the opportunities to reconnect in the coming year. Homecoming Weekend is right around the corner on October 16-18, and we look forward to welcoming many of you back to campus for our annual tailgating celebration at the football game on Saturday.



We are also looking forward to the 2027 AOTA INSPIRE Conference in Boston. With the conference taking place so close to home, we anticipate a strong UNE presence. We are currently planning a special reception during the conference and look forward to sharing additional details in the coming months. We hope many of you will join us as we celebrate the accomplishments of our alumni, students, and faculty while connecting with colleagues from across the profession. These gatherings provide a wonderful opportunity to reconnect while celebrating our shared UNE pride.

There is also exciting news on the academic front. UNE is actively developing an entry-level Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) degree track while continuing to offer our Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT) degree. The initiative behind this curricular change reflects UNE's commitment to meeting the evolving needs of our profession while providing students with multiple pathways to become outstanding

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INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

occupational therapy practitioners. In addition, the MSOT program will transition to a fall start date beginning in 2027. As these developments progress, we will continue to share updates and opportunities for alumni engagement.

Thank you for your continued support, advocacy, and partnership. The strength of UNE OT lies in our community, and I am grateful for all you do to advance our mission and represent UNE so well. I hope to see many of you at Homecoming, AOTA Inspire in Boston, and future alumni events.

Caroline Beals

Caroline Beals, PhD, OTR/L, CHSE

Department News

Welcome & Congratulations to our newest alumni - MSOT Class of 2026!

Congratulations to the UNE MSOT Class of 2026! We were thrilled to celebrate the accomplishments of this outstanding class culminating in the Westbrook College of Health Professions (WCHP) Graduation Ceremony and the University of New England Commencement festivities in May. Throughout the week leading up to graduation, students participated in a variety of celebrations, recognition events, and professional development sessions focused on NBCOT preparation, licensure, and career readiness as they prepared to transition from students to practitioners.

Please keep in touch by [completing this form](#) and pop in to visit anytime! We love seeing our alumni!



This year's celebrations also included recognition of several outstanding achievements within the UNE MSOT community. We are especially proud to share that **Julia White MSOT'26 was honored with the WCHP Faculty Cup Award**, highlighting her exceptional leadership as UNESOTA President and her dedicated mental health advocacy through the Yellow Tulip Project. A standout scholar and Maine LEND (Maine Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities) trainee, Julia's recognition celebrates her clinical excellence and her commitment to destigmatizing mental illness within the community.

Left: WCHP Associate Dean Bernice Mills and Julia White, MSOT Class of 2026

Do you employ UNE MSOT Alumni? We would love to hear from you!

As part of our accreditation tracking, we are seeking input from those who employ graduates of the UNE MSOT program. Your participation in a very brief survey (less than 10 minutes to complete) will provide our program with data and insight as to how our graduates are entering the workforce and their preparedness. We sincerely value your feedback and time! If you or someone you know employs graduates from the UNE MSOT Program, please consider responding to and sharing the link below. [Employer Survey.](#)

News from the Fieldwork Office

As we continue through the Fall semester, the Class of 2027 is out across the country on their first of two Level II fieldwork experiences. Throughout the spring and summer, students participated in Level I fieldwork experiences at the Storey Smith Pediatric Clinic, Pediatric Development Center, Coastal Kids Occupational Therapy, and Maine Medical Center's Portland and Biddeford locations. These experiences allowed students to observe a variety of occupational therapy practice settings and learn from skilled clinicians, many of whom are UNE OT program graduates. We are grateful for the ongoing support of our alumni and clinical partners who help shape the next generation of occupational therapists. If you are interested in hosting a student or supporting fieldwork education, we would love to connect with you. Please contact Jessica Walton jwalton5@une.edu to learn more about fieldwork placement opportunities and ways to become involved.

Have a recent move or job change? Interested in hosting a UNE OT student for fieldwork or possible future capstone? Please keep us updated on your practice settings, interests and whereabouts by [completing this form!](#)



Alumni Highlight!

Margaret Bolger, MSOT '23, OTR/L will present the [keynote](#) at AOTA Mental Health SIS conference this Fall!

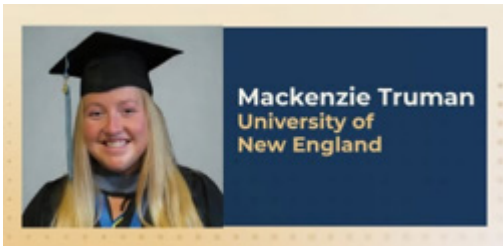
Scholarships

Judith Giencke Kimball Endowed Scholarship

The Judith Giencke Kimball Endowed Scholarship is presented each fall to a second year UNE OT student to provide financial support during Level II Fieldwork placements. This scholarship was established in 2018 by the family and friends of Dr. Judith Kimball in honor of her 36 years of service to UNE. As the founding director of the Occupational Therapy program, Judy prepared countless students for their work in the field of occupational therapy.

All alumni are welcome to make a financial gift to the Judith Giencke Kimball Endowed Scholarship at any time at une.edu/givenow and use the search tool to find "Judith Kimball Endowed Scholarship" to make a gift to this scholarship. *Right: Judith Giencke Kimball*





UNE OT Dream Financial Aid Award

Congratulations to Mackenzie Truman, MSOT'26, the winner of the UNE OT Dream Financial Aid Award administered through The American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF). This award covers the costs of the NBCOT certification exam for a recent MSOT graduate. Created by an occupational therapist who experienced the financial challenges of higher education, this

unique award supports graduates as they transition into practice and demonstrates the immediate impact of philanthropy on the profession.



NBCOT Certification Endowed Scholarship Recipient

Congratulations to Sydney Tooze, MSOT Class of 2027 on being selected as one of the 2026 NBCOT® - OTR® & COTA® Certification Endowed Scholarship recipients! Sydney will receive over \$2,000 to support her educational goals.

News from Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND)



In April, UNE students in the Maine LEND program helped fit people with disabilities with adaptive tricycles provided by the Maine Trykers. Thank you to all the students and faculty who helped make this a memorable event.



News from Center for Advance Interprofessional Education and Practice (CAIEP)

Learning Together, Leading Together: OT Students Learn to Contribute to Interprofessional Practice

At the University of New England, occupational therapy students are learning an important lesson long before graduation: great patient care is rarely delivered alone. Through the annual Interprofessional Collaboration Across Campus experience, OT students join peers from nursing, physical therapy, physician assistant, and other health professions programs to learn with, from, and about one another as they prepare for collaborative practice.

Designed around the Interprofessional Education Collaborative competencies, the program challenges students to explore professional roles, communication, teamwork, ethics, and patient-centered care through discussion, case analysis, reflection, and team-based activities. They are challenged to advocate for their profession's role on the healthcare team and encouraged to seek out other professions to learn from them while at UNE.

The impact on occupational therapy students is significant. Of OT students who responded to a post-event survey, 100% reported that their ability to collaborate interprofessionally was either "somewhat better" or "much better" following the experience, and more than half reporting it was "much better."

Students consistently highlighted a deeper understanding of professional roles and greater confidence in working as part of a healthcare team. One OT student reflected, "This was a great experience. It helped me to feel more comfortable talking about the OT perspective in healthcare. It also helped me understand the roles of other professionals and how we can

collaborate in the future.” Another noted that understanding the contributions of different professions “will make patient care that much smoother and more thorough.”



For alumni who know the value of teamwork in practice, these experiences represent more than a classroom exercise. They are helping future occupational therapists build the communication skills, professional confidence, and collaborative mindset needed to deliver whole-person care and improve outcomes for the patients and communities they will serve.

Left: MSOT Class of 2026 graduates Jenny Frick, Abigail Fournier, Gabriela Puentes, Amelia Teta, and Alexis Tardy with faculty receiving IP Honors distinction cords.

Faculty Recognition



Faculty Awards

Huge congrats to Occupational Therapy faculty member **Elise Ostensson, MS, OTR/L, CSRS** for being one of the 2026 Open Education Resources: Open Collaboration Award winners! Faced with a lack of affordable neuroscience resources, Elise worked with UNE physical therapy colleague, Dr. Marissa Lyon, to build a customized, zero-cost neuroscience resource specifically for OT and PT students.

Left: Faculty receiving Open Collaboration Award

Presentations

Assistant Professor Jennie Dapice shared her research at the International Society for Anthrozoology’s 2026 annual conference in Paris, France. Her presentation highlighted emerging evidence on how therapy dog programming can impact school climate by promoting positive school environments.

Assistant Clinical Professor Elise Ostensson presented a research poster at the American Association of Physics Teachers 2026 Annual Conference in collaboration with a faculty member from UNE’s Physics Department. Their interdisciplinary project explored the use of occupational therapy adaptive equipment to teach concepts of mechanical advantage in undergraduate physics labs. The poster highlighted findings from student feedback collected through an IRB-approved study, demonstrating how hands-on applications of adaptive equipment can enhance learning and help students connect physics principles to real-world healthcare practice.

Check out the additional faculty presentation spotlights below in our updates from AOTA!

Dr. Elizabeth Crampsey, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs in the Westbrook College of Health Professions at the University of New England, was elected as a Distinguished Fellow in the Occupational Therapy Academy of the National Academies of Practice. Crampsey has served as associate dean since 2023 and as a clinical professor in UNE’s Department of Occupational Therapy with clinical and academic experience in pediatric, acute care, neuro-recovery, and intensive care settings. She is recognized for advancing interprofessional education and mentorship, including guiding students through the Interprofessional Honors Distinction via the Center to Advance Interprofessional Education and Practice.





We celebrate our **Administrative Coordinator, Melissa Walsh**, as the recipient of the Westbrock College of Health Profession's 2025-2026 Excellence in Service Award for Outstanding and Continuing Service! Melissa is often described as the "glue" that keeps things moving, bringing organization, kindness, and unwavering support to students, faculty, staff, and colleagues across UNE. Her dedication to fostering connection, celebrating student success, and managing countless behind-the-scenes details has made a lasting impact on our community. We are incredibly fortunate to have Melissa as part of UNE and are thrilled to see her exceptional service recognized with this well-deserved award. Congratulations, Melissa!

Left: Melissa Walsh with Bernice Mills, Associate Dean of Student and Clinical Affairs

Departmental Events - Spring and Summer Recap

AOTA INSPIRE 2026 Annual Conference & Expo

Keynote Speaker, J.R. Martinez



A strong delegation from the University of New England Occupational Therapy program attended the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) INSPIRE Annual Conference & Expo in Anaheim, California. Faculty and students joined occupational therapy professionals from across the country to engage in educational sessions, share scholarship, build professional networks, and explore emerging innovations in the field.

UNE was well represented through several faculty and student presentations. MSOT Class of 2026 student Julia White and Dr.

Kris Winston presented their poster, *Service as Occupation: The Yellow Tulip Project*, highlighting the role of service and community engagement in occupational participation. Dr. Carrie Beals shared her expertise on the occupational therapy needs of college students following concussion, while Dr. Carol Lambdin-Pattavina presented on fostering professional identity development in occupational therapy education.

Experiences like AOTA INSPIRE strengthen connections among students, faculty, and alumni while supporting professional identity development, advocacy, and mentorship. Students returned energized and inspired, bringing new ideas and perspectives back to the UNE OT community.



Alumni Event in Anaheim, CA



While in Anaheim, faculty, students and alumni gathered for an evening of connection and conversation, including one that helped facilitate connections for fieldwork placements. The evening reflected the strength of the UNE OT community and the shared commitment to mentoring the next generation of occupational therapists.

Left: UNE faculty, students and alumni in Anaheim, CA!

Pi Theta Epsilon Updates

UNE's Pi Theta Epsilon (PTE) Class of 2027 chapter had an active and successful year, offering several opportunities for learning, professional growth, and service.

The chapter hosted three Lunch and Learn events to provide occupational therapy students with the opportunity to explore specialized and emerging areas of practice in greater depth. Dr. Kasey Barahona, OTD, OTR/L, shared her work supporting youth transitioning out of orphan care, and Maggie Bolger, MSOT'23, OTR/L, discussed her experience developing and implementing an occupational therapy program on an adolescent psychiatric unit. The third Lunch and Learn was co-hosted with physical therapy students and introduced attendees to the unique opportunities and experiences associated with travel therapy.

In addition to these educational events, the chapter hosted its annual Nancy MacRae Meaningful Occupations Auction and organized bottles and cans redemption efforts throughout the year. Together, these fundraising initiatives generated nearly \$700 in support of the American Occupational Therapy Foundation's St. Catherine Challenge which promotes and funds occupational therapy research.

Student Org updates

Over the past 8 months, the Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD) UNE Chapter has hosted several book discussion events to facilitate conversations around diversity, inclusion, and justice in healthcare. The COTAD UNE Chapter collaborated with the Medical Student Pride Alliance for several events, including UNE Drag Night and the Frannie Peabody Center's Maine AIDS Walk. They also collaborated with the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA) to host the UNE Portland Campus Pride Party celebrating LGBTQIA+ identities. In November, they held their annual Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil to honor transgender individuals who lost their lives in 2025-2026. COTAD also hosted a film screening for *The Sound of Metal* to facilitate discussion of disability advocacy, and a Coffee and Conversation event at Burundi Star Coffee to recognize local Black-owned businesses for Black History Month. Please follow the club on Instagram: [@cotad.ch_une](https://www.instagram.com/cotad.ch_une)

The University of New England Student Occupational Therapy Association (UNESOTA) Class of 2027 has been exceptionally active throughout the past year. In addition to ongoing service and community engagement efforts, students supported brain aneurysm awareness, mental health advocacy, and Alzheimer's disease awareness through participation in events such as the Kat Walk, NAMI Walk and Walk to End Alzheimer's. The chapter continued its annual Friendsgiving tradition with students, faculty, campus partners, housekeeping, and security staff to foster shared sense of belonging within the UNE community. In support of mental health promotion, students expanded the Yellow Tulip Project garden to maintain a visible campus space dedicated to hope, resilience, and stigma reduction.

This year, UNESOTA also partnered with GAPSA to participate in Fresh Check Day, a nationally recognized program dedicated to promoting mental health awareness and well-being on college campuses. As part of the event, UNESOTA hosted an interactive booth called Follow Your Art. Attendees were invited to reflect on their mental health and well-being while decorating ceramic tiles. These individually designed tiles will be assembled into a collaborative community art installation that will be permanently displayed in the Finley Recreation Center.

Healthcare Explorations Fair

UNE Occupational Therapy students came together this summer at the Health Careers Exploration Camp to share their passion for occupational therapy with high school students from rural and underserved communities throughout Maine. This free program provides hands-on exposure to a variety of health professions, helping students explore future career paths.

Through interactive demonstrations and activities including a spirited relay race featuring adaptive equipment, our students highlighted the innovative, collaborative, and client-centered nature of occupational therapy.



Park Danforth Fair

In July, second-year students hosted the third annual UNE OT Health and Wellness Fair designed specifically for older adults at The Park Danforth. Topics of discussion ranged from kitchen gadgets, strengthening exercises, relationships, difficult conversations, sleep health, volunteerism and tech support/internet safety. *Photo left.*

Field Work Send Off

In August, we held a ceremony for the Class of 2027 as they headed off for fieldwork assignments this fall and spring. We are so proud of all you have accomplished thus far and can't wait to see what wonderful things you do!

Photo right.



Save the Dates

UNE Homecoming Tailgate

October 17, 11am. | Biddeford Campus

Look for the WCHP tents in the Alford Forum Lot! Come join us for food and fun, followed by the Homecoming football game at the Blue Storm Stadium.

2027 AOTA Inspire

April 8-10 | Boston, MA



We look forward to seeing many members of the UNE OT Community there. Be on the lookout for a special update regarding our Alumni Gathering – you won't want to miss it!

Pediatric Adaptive Projects Expo 2027

April 14, 4:30 – 6 pm.

Girard Innovation Hall

UNE Portland Campus

716 Stevens Ave, Portland, ME 04103



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QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER?

We would LOVE to hear from YOU!

Please contact UNE OT Department at uneot@une.edu

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