FWI Funding Statement

Names: Lorie Shimmell & Sue Baptiste
Faculty/Area: Occupational Therapy Program - School of Rehabilitation Science
Project title:
Targeting the Globe: Developing Evidence-Based Student Internationalization in Occupational Therapy

Fostering Collaboration & Interdisciplinarity:
Targeting the Globe has established a previously unrealized global collaboration between educators in occupational therapy on all continents to understand the current state of educational programs in preparing student occupational therapists to undertake international placements. While focussed on occupational therapy education and curriculum pertaining to international clinical education, this does not occur in silos, and we learned that many programs worldwide integrate international practice experiences that engage learners from multiple health disciplines and others. Best practices will be informed by this new understanding, activated within McMaster University’s occupational therapy curriculum, disseminated within the global occupational therapy community and through a health education literature forum.

Work with the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) is scheduled to continue in a number of initiatives as a result of this project: we anticipate a) forging a global community of practice to enable educational programs to learn from one another; and, b) developing reciprocal partnerships for exchange among countries and cultures. The results of this project were presented as a peer-reviewed oral presentation at the WFOT Congress 2014 on June 20 in Yokohama, Japan. Interested partners in attendance provided names and contact information to begin the process of developing a community of practice focused on international clinical education. Results and action plans will be vetted through the WFOT website, the office of the Executive Director, and the project investigators.

Exposing Students to New / Emerging Research:
Targeting the Globe has taken an important and unique approach to deepen our understanding of how student occupational therapists are currently being prepared to learn in clinical settings internationally. To date, research and literature about this area of education have been almost exclusively initiated in Northern, Western and European countries. This is contrary to the pursuit of equal access to international learning, and did not engage those whose learning occurs in lower economic countries. Students were engaged from the beginning to the culmination of this project, helping to design the strategies by which we learned about other practices, and interpreting the implications on internationalization in education. Students presented this work during the Occupational Therapy Class of 2014 Evidence Based Practice (EBP) Symposium on June 25, 2014.

Offering Student Experiences Beyond Traditional Borders:
Students were engaged in this project throughout all phases with guidance, support and empowerment from the investigators, including the WFOT Executive. They collaborated on an international stage to launch the global survey, and subsequently interviewed educators from varied countries and continents to gain a deeper understanding of current practices in preparing students for learning from and contributing to international placement opportunities. Often students do not have the opportunity within such projects to pursue the mechanisms of investigation themselves; however, in this case, students experienced actively
the complete continuum of research: from following a topic of current importance while ensuring that a truly global understanding was sought. Future students will be supported by more comprehensive preparation for learning in international contexts, due to this project.

**Challenging the Confines of Existing Programming & Advancing New Paradigms of Research or Education:** While students have received preparation for international placement learning, placement sites and practice areas have largely not been executed in systematic or sustainable ways. Deeper understanding about cultural differences in destination placement sites has not been realized when ongoing partnerships between particular countries and sites do not occur over the longer term. Understanding that unique international learning in placements is commonly available only to students from higher-resourced countries is a poignant but critical realization. This is inherently counter-intuitive to the promotion of authentic cross-border learning, and globalization in health education. By recognizing these current realities, and making the necessary ethical decisions about how we at McMaster will adopt new strategies for international preparation, we can support more equity in access through strategies such as sustainable exchange programs, mutual cultural awareness learning between educational institutions with whom these partnerships are forged, and by equalizing the playing field for access to these learning opportunities.

**Sustaining or Expanding Outcomes:**
A review and revision of the international placement stream will be undertaken using new strategies emerging from this project. Sustainable placement partnerships will be sought with countries and educational institutions.
Further, remote mutual learning possibilities will be explored to support the learning of students who will undertake international placement, as well as for those who will not. Those who choose to stay in domestic placements also need enhanced comfort and understanding about working with colleagues and clients from around the world.

**Barriers or Challenges to Project Goals:**
We are fortunate to have received the Forward with Integrity grant monies for this project and have employed them with care in accomplishing the goals and intention of the project. We set out to determine current practices in occupational educational programs to prepare students for international clinical learning. The time in which this project had to be completed was extremely limited, given student course restraints, and access to WFOT resources. Thus, we must revisit the data to complete deeper, post-project analyses. The availability of further time and funding would permit interviews with a greater number of stakeholders to broaden and deepen the understanding we have initiated. For example, time and funds permitted five (5) interviews out of thirty (30) prospective interviewees who had indicated their interest and willingness to participate in this way through the initial survey. We will develop a plan for next steps.

**Visualizing the Project:**
We are including the PowerPoint presentation delivered to WFOT Congress 2014 by L. Shimmell and S. Baptiste, and the poster presentation delivered at the Class of 2014 Occupational Therapy Symposium by students M. Ryckman and K. DeMille.