

BACKGROUND AND REQUEST

Marion Technical College Associate of Applied Science in Occupational Therapist Assistant

Recommendation

**This program clearly meets the Chancellor's standards for associate degree programs.
There were no serious concerns raised in this review.**

Request: Marion Technical College proposes an Associate of Applied Science in Occupational Therapist Assistant in response to the growing need for trained Occupational Therapist Assistants in Central Ohio. The Occupational Therapy Assistant is considered a high demand, high skill, and high wage occupation, and healthcare providers throughout Central Ohio have indicated their need for qualified rehabilitation professionals to the college.

The American Occupational Therapy Association reports that Ohio only has ten Occupational Therapist Assistant programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (all located at Ohio's two-year public institutions). The ten campuses currently offering this program are serving geographic areas of the state that are not substantially overlapping into Central Ohio, thereby leaving a large percentage of the region underserved. Marion Technical College and North Central State College have established a collaborative relationship as a result of the Ohio Skills Bank Region 6 Healthcare Career Pathways initiative that addresses the shortage of health care workers in Central Ohio. Together, they are working to ensure healthcare providers in Central Ohio will have access to the qualified trained professionals they need to meet their current and future job openings.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, states that employment of Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs) in the United States is expected to grow twenty-five (25) percent from 2006-2016. The Ohio Job Outlook 2014: *Occupational Employment Projections* publication lists Occupational Therapy Assistants as one of "Ohio's fastest growing occupations," with an anticipated growth in employment of 27 percent and the potential of 550 openings through 2014. Job openings in the field are resulting from new positions being created and the replacement of Occupational Therapist Assistants who are leaving the profession because of career advancement opportunities or retirement. Due to limited number of accredited OTA programs in Ohio, the college anticipates serving the needs of the health care community in Region 6 and the surrounding areas.

Throughout the development of this proposed program, the college used the expertise and experience of Rhodes State College's Occupational Therapy Assistant Program Director for assistance in curriculum development, laboratory design, the OTA accreditation process, and equipment purchases. Rhodes State College also donated some unused equipment to the college to minimize costs and effectively make use of their resources. This collaborative relationship included Rhodes's Program Director serving on Marion's OTA Program Advisory Committee. The three colleges (Marion Technical College, North Central State College and Rhodes State College) will continue to collaborate on the need for new programs, sharing of resources and "best practices" to ensure the region has the skilled workforce it needs.

Graduates of the program will be able to find career opportunities in northeast Ohio's public and private health care facilities, early intervention centers, nursing homes, mental health care facilities, rehabilitation hospitals and clinics, adult-day care centers, health and wellness centers, and acute care programs. Starting salaries range from \$36,000 to \$48,000 a year. Due to the demand for trained Occupational Therapist Assistants in Central Ohio, graduates of the proposed program will be actively recruited for positions in the region.

Program Purpose/Mission: The purpose of the proposed program is to provide students with the opportunity to obtain a degree in a growing healthcare profession needed in central Ohio. Marion Technical College emphasizes "real-world"

learning, applying practical theory and laboratory experiences directly to workplace settings. The college views education as a lifelong continuum and strives to be the community's first choice for learning. Serving seven counties and as well as students who commute from surrounding counties, the college's mission is to, "provide an enriched and personal educational experience for its community." The college offers more than forty associate degree and certificate programs in business, engineering, health, information, medical sciences, and public service technologies.

Enrollment: The College is projecting an enrollment of 36 full-time students and 28 part-time students beginning fall semester 2010. The college projects that student enrollment will grow to 40 full-time students and 30 part-time students, beginning January 2011. Prospective students have already inquired about the program and have been placed in a database to be contacted once the proposed program is approved.

High school students participating in the College Tech Prep Program, Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO), CollegeNOW, the Governor's "Seniors to Sophomores" initiative and others interested in a healthcare career will be attracted to the proposed program.

Curriculum: The curriculum is structured to provide students with the general education and specialized technical courses needed to meet the educational requirements for this proposed degree. Off-site clinical experiences are incorporated into the curriculum and offer students the opportunity to work with professionals in the field and learn from their knowledge and experiences.

Graduates of the proposed program will be eligible to take the national certification examination administered by the National Board of Certification in Occupational Therapy. Upon successful completion of the exam, students will be awarded the title "Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant."

Faculty/Resource Needs: The Occupational Therapist Assistant program will be located within the Allied Health Division of the college and the program director will report to the Dean of Allied Health. The college plans to hire a new Program Director who will be responsible for meeting the educational and accreditation standards of the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education and for the management and administration of the program. An academic clinical coordinator will be hired to instruct some of the OTA courses and to evaluate students' clinical field experiences. Additional faculty members will be utilized as needed.

The college, through informal contacts, has begun the process of becoming an accredited program through Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association. A letter of intent will be submitted to ACOTE following the Chancellor's approval of the proposed program. The required on-site evaluation by an accreditation team will take place prior to June 2012, to ensure the first class of students will be eligible to take the certification exam and obtain licensure.

Students enrolled in the program will share the facilities and equipment with the college's established Physical Therapist Assisting program for the first year of technical courses. The college has available classroom space, computer labs and tutorial labs. Students will have access to the campus library, student support services, financial aid, and other services to ensure their academic success. The college is financially prepared to offer this program.

The college is currently running a capital funding campaign to construct a new Health Sciences Building with groundbreaking planned for July 2009 and occupancy planned for January 2011. The new building will house the college's nursing program and several allied health programs.

Program Duplication: The proposed program is not being offered at any other two-year institution within thirty-five miles of the college. James A. Rhodes State College in Lima and the newly approved program at North Central State College in Mansfield offer similar programs. Both colleges were supportive of the program's development and provided their expertise, guidance to ensure the proposed program's success.

Due to the distance between the three campuses, there are ample clinical sites available for students enrolled in each program. The colleges are committed to working together on additional program endeavors and workforce development issues. Each expressed their willingness to share “best practices” and to explore opportunities for collaboration with other interested campuses in Ohio.