Program Overview

The 74-credit joint Associate of Science Degree Program in Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) is offered in collaboration with Rutgers Partner Colleges including Camden County College, County College of Morris, Cumberland County College, Hudson County Community College, Mercer County Community College, Ocean County College, Passaic County Community College, Raritan Valley Community College, Warren County Community College and Salem Community College.

Students complete 32 general education credits at a Partner College as prerequisite to the 42 credits of professional coursework at Rutgers.

The 42 credits completed at Rutgers include academic and fieldwork education and can be completed on a full-time (15 months) or part-time (24 months) basis. The final four months of the program consist of 16 weeks of full-time fieldwork education for all students.

Graduates of an accredited OTA program are eligible to sit for the National Certification Examination for the Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA) administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). Successful completion of this exam enables graduates to obtain licensure for practice in New Jersey and many other states.

Accreditation Status

The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program within the School of Health Related Professions at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, has applied
for accreditation and has been granted Developing Program Status by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), located at 4720 Montgomery Lane, Suite 200 Bethesda, MD 20814-3449. ACOTE’s telephone number c/o AOTA is (301) 652-AOTA and its Web address is www.acoteonline.org

Once accreditation of the OTA program has been obtained, graduates will be eligible to sit for the national certification examination for the occupational therapy assistant administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). After successful completion of this exam, the individual will be a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA). In addition, most states including New Jersey require licensure in order to practice; however, state licenses are usually based on the results of the NBCOT Certification Examination.

ACOTE

c/o Accreditation Department
American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)
4720 Montgomery Lane, Suite 200
Bethesda, MD 20814-3449

Tel: (301) 652-AOTA.

The OTA Program will be notified on ACOTE’s decision regarding full accreditation by December 31, 2013.

**Program Description**

The Rutgers, School of Health-Related Professions (SHRP) OTA program offers a 42-credit professional curriculum on the Rutgers Scotch Plains Campus and includes supervised fieldwork education provided by Rutgers clinical partners in healthcare, educational, and other community settings. The curriculum has been developed to meet the Standards for an Accredited Occupational Therapy Assistant Program (2011) established by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE).

The professional coursework supports the program’s mission emphasizing human occupation and adaptation, the process of becoming an OT professional, and the required competencies and contextual influences of OT practice.
The program uses web-enhanced design for most courses and one course is conducted exclusively by web-based instruction requiring:

- ability to perform basic operations of the computer
- ability to connect, access, and browse the internet using a high speed connection
- use of software applications such as Word and Power Point,
- Ability to use on-line communication tools
- software installation for security and virus protection

**Description of the Profession**
The Occupational Therapy Profession was established in 1917, and in 1958 the American Occupational Therapy Association’s leadership recognized the role of the Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant. Occupational therapy assistant’s (OTA) work in collaboration and under the supervision of occupational therapists in healthcare, educational, and community settings to help develop, restore, or enhance occupational performance of persons who are challenged by disability, trauma, and/or the aging process. There are employment opportunities for OTA’s in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, long term care facilities, community mental health centers, and public and private schools.

Occupational Therapy Assistant’s must receive supervision from occupational therapists to deliver occupational therapy services. The responsibilities of the Occupational Therapy Assistant include:

- Contributing to the process of evaluating a client by gathering information and administering selected assessments.
- Assisting with the development of client centered occupation-based intervention plans
- Selecting and providing direct occupational therapy interventions to individuals and groups
- Documenting occupational therapy services provided

**Student Expectations:**
The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program faculty assume that each student enrolled in the program is interested in exploring and developing skills in occupational therapy, and that the life of each student will be shaped by the process of education and professional socialization.

Students are expected to assume responsibility for study and practice, while the faculty provides developmentally appropriate content, mentorship, and opportunities for the student to master key competencies.
**Full-time and Part-time Study Options:**
The 42-credits completed at Rutgers include academic and fieldwork education that can be completed on a full-time (15 months/fall enrollment) or part-time (24 months/spring enrollment) basis. The final four months of the program consists of 16 weeks of full-time fieldwork education for all students.

**Department Faculty**
Please review faculty profiles by selecting the department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Counseling Professions.

**Primary Campus Location**
All courses for the Professional Phase of the Occupational Therapy Program are taken at Rutgers Scotch Plains, NJ campus.

**Curriculum**
See database for program requirements and course descriptions and select your program.

**Note:** Program of Study Subject to Change

**Mission/Goals/Objectives**

The Rutgers, School of Health-Related Professions (SHRP) Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program is committed to preparing Occupational Therapy Assistants as professionals who will contribute to the health and well-being of individuals, groups, and populations in New Jersey and beyond.

The OTA program prepares students to serve people of all ages who experience illness, disease, disability, and challenging life circumstances to adapt by participating in meaningful occupations. The curriculum prepares the OTA to practice as a dynamic and inter-professional team member working under the supervision of an occupational therapist, within health care, educational, and other community settings.

The OTA program is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in undergraduate education in collaboration with other New Jersey colleges, industry partners, and fieldwork educators. The program faculty contribute to scholarship that supports healthcare education and occupational therapy practice. The program faculty and students participate in service to underserved persons as part of the educational program.
Upon completion of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program the graduate will:

1. Become a COTA (Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant) by successfully passing the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy Assistant (NBCOT) exam within six months of graduation.
2. Demonstrate the roles and responsibilities of the OTA as defined by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), consistent with the licensure regulations for an OTA in New Jersey.
3. Communicate effectively in an understandable and professional manner with clients, families, colleagues, and the public.
4. Produce clear and understandable documentation according to the requirements of the facility, federal and state laws, regulatory and payer requirements, and AOTA documents.
5. Deliver occupational therapy services under the supervision of an occupational therapist (OT) in accordance with the AOTA Practice Framework.
6. Contribute to the delivery of high-quality, cost-effective and integrated care as a team member in health, education, and community settings.
7. Participate as an occupational therapy professional in local, state, and national organizations.

*Program Partners for Fieldwork Education (Partners are added on an ongoing basis)*

- Academy Learning Center
- All Care therapy Solutions, LLC
- Ancora Psychiatric Hospital
- Atlantic Health Systems, various locations in NJ
- Bergen County Special Services, Paramus, NJ
- Brick Township Public Schools
- Bridgeway Care Center
- Cape May Country Special Services
- Care One
- Cedar Crest Community, Pompton Plains, NJ
- Celebrate the Children, various locations in NJ
- Cerebral Palsy Center of Middlesex County, Edison, NJ
- Cerebral Palsy of NJ – Jardine Academy
- Children’s Specialized Hospital
- Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey, locations throughout NJ
- ECLC of New Jersey
- Fox Rehabilitation
- Genesis Rehabilitation Services, locations throughout NJ
- Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital
- Health South Rehabilitation Hospital, Toms River, NJ
- Intensive Therapeutics, Fanwood, NJ
- JFK Johnson Institute for Rehabilitation, Edison, NJ
- Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, locations throughout NJ
- Matheny Health and Educational Center
- New Jersey Institute for Disabilities, Edison, NJ
- Positive Steps
- Rutgers Newark Therapy Services
- Select Medical
- Somerset Medical Center
- St. Joseph’s Healthcare System
- Tandem Management Company, locations throughout NJ
- Tender Touch Rehab Services, Inc.
- The Calais School
- The Phoenix Center
- Tiny tots Therapy Inc.
- Trinitas Children’s Therapy Services, services to schools throughout NJ
- Universal Institute for Rehabilitation, Livingston, NJ
- University Behavioral Health Care Partial Hospital
- Windsor Healthcare

**Admissions Requirements**

Admission to the OTA Program is competitive and meeting the minimal requirements does not guarantee admission. Applicants apply directly to Rutgers-School of Health Related Professions by June 15 for Fall admission to the full-time program, and by November 15, for Winter/Spring admission to the part-time program.

Individuals interested in applying to the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program at Rutgers must first apply and enroll in the pre-professional phase of the OTA program at a College Partner.

The 32 credits of required prerequisite coursework are listed below:

- English Composition I - 3 credits
- English Composition II - 3 credits
- Anatomy and Physiology I with lab - 4 credits
- Anatomy and Physiology II with lab - 4 credits
- General Psychology - 3 credits
- Developmental Psychology (lifespan) - 3 credits
- Introduction to Sociology - 3 credits
- College Math, Algebra, or Statistics - 3 credits
- Ethics - 3 credits
- Diversity Studies - 3 credits

Applicant transcript must document that courses in Developmental Psychology/Lifespan and Human Anatomy and Physiology have been completed during the past five years.

Applicant must submit documentation of a minimum of 40 hours of observation experience in two different settings where occupational therapy services are provided (for example, 20 hours - children and youth, 20 hours - adult rehabilitation). The documentation must be signed by a licensed occupational therapist or licensed occupational therapy assistant.

Applicant must submit two letters of recommendation using the OTA Applicant Recommendation Form available on the program web site.

One letter of recommendation must be from an Occupational Therapy Practitioner and the other from a college advisor who can validate the applicant’s plan for completion of prerequisite courses.

Applicant must write and submit an essay justifying OT as a career choice, reflecting on volunteer experience, prerequisite coursework, and other community service.

Applicant must complete a personal interview with the OTA Program Admission Committee.

Applicants who did not attend secondary school in the US or have not completed a sufficient number of college level English courses are required to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Acceptable scores for TOEFL are as follows: 550 and above for paper based test and 79 for Internet based test. All results must be forwarded directly to SHPR from the testing agency.

Please Note that a felony conviction may affect a graduate’s ability to sit for the NBCOT certification examination or attain state licensure. An individual who is considering entering an OT educational program or who has already entered an OT educational program can have his or her background reviewed by requesting an Early Determination Review. The fee for this review is $100.00.
For information on candidate code of conduct, character, and early review contact:

Credentialing Services at NBCOT
12 S. Summit Avenue, Suite 100
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
(301) 990-7979

The Admissions Committee looks at the cumulative grade point average for the prerequisite coursework (32 credits). A cumulative G.P.A. of 2.5 in these courses is the committee's benchmark, however each applicant's entire application portfolio is reviewed to assess the candidate's ability to complete the program requirements and become an effective, contributing member of the OT profession.

The applicant must have achieved a minimum grade of “C” (2.0) in each prerequisite course.

**G.P.A. minimum requirement/credentialing requirement:**
2.5 cumulative G.P.A. in prerequisite courses

**For More Information**

**For additional information about the application process contact:** Office of Enrollment Services - Admissions at (973) 972-5336 or via e-mail.

**For additional information about the program contact:**

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
RBHS - School of Health Related Professions
Occupational Assistant Program
Catherine N. Colucci, MA, OTR – Program Director
1776 Raritan Rd.
Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

**Phone:** 908-889-2474  
**E-mail:** coluccn@shrp.rutgers.edu

Additional [programmatic information](#) is available.