

Holistic Admissions: Improving Diversity in the Occupational Therapy Workforce

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Introduction/Rationale: Human beings must have access to systems that support their health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, *Implicit Bias* impacts healthcare providers' ability to deliver egalitarian care. Mitigation of implicit bias is critical for a socially and medically just healthcare system. This begins with educational programs: institutions must provide diverse and inclusive environments to improve students' understanding of diverse populations. In the USA, however, OT programs at all levels are decidedly not diverse. A culturally competent and diverse workforce is critical for effective practice (<https://www.aota.org>). The Ohio State University OT Division implemented a Holistic Admissions process to attract students with "*diversity of experience, background and thought*"

Objectives: 1. Describe the rationale for and process of Holistic Admissions and 2. Report the effect of Holistic Admissions on diversity among occupational therapy students.

Approach: The OT division created an Admissions Vision, describing the value placed on diversity, with input from multiple stakeholder groups. The holistic admissions process considers three equally weighted aspects of a student's application: academic merit, attributes, and experiences, assessed through review of paper applications and an in-person interview.

Results: Following the implementation of holistic admissions, representation from racial/ethnic groups other than white more than doubled (5% to 14%) and incoming student academic credentials remained consistent. Gender distribution did not change.

Conclusion: Future efforts must include more effective recruitment to ensure a diverse pool of applicants. The classes remain dominated by students who identify themselves as white and female, however, we remain optimistic that we will continue to see increasing diversity.