

# **Howard University**

## **Occupational Therapy Doctoral Capstone Program**

### **Doctoral Capstone**

Students complete a doctoral capstone project to demonstrate synthesis of in-depth knowledge in a focused area of study. The doctoral capstone includes a scholarly literature review, needs assessment, goals/objectives, and an evaluation plan based on a specific focus area, and is designed through collaboration of the faculty and student consistent with the curriculum design and doctoral capstone experience (DCE). Potential focus areas for the capstone project and experience include clinical practice skills, research skills, administration, leadership, program and policy development, advocacy, education, and/or theory development. Core curricular themes that serve as a thread for the doctoral capstone experience and project consist of: 1) Diversity and the Underserved, 2) Research and Scholarship, and 3) Leadership and Professionalism. In addition to alignment with core curricular themes, special emphasis is placed on diversity and the underserved as a part of the program's curriculum theme with a focus on exposing students to research in the area of health disparities and occupational and social justice. Health disparities and social justice support the mission of the OT department and impact a wide range of underserved populations.

Preparation for the capstone project occurs early in the curriculum-year one, and is developed throughout the program starting with the doctoral research project courses (doctoral research projects I, II, II), and culminates with the completion of the doctoral capstone experience and capstone project in year three. The goal of the doctoral capstone project and experience is to develop an occupational therapist with skills that are more advanced (beyond the level of a generalist).

### **Doctoral Capstone Experience**

The doctoral capstone experiential component or practicum is specifically designed to directly connect clinical practice with scholarship via the implementation of a scholarly doctoral capstone project. The doctoral capstone experience provides an in-depth, customized experience specific to the doctoral pursuit of occupational therapy and provides students with the opportunity to expand and refine knowledge & skills acquired in the curriculum. Preparation for the doctoral capstone experiential component of the curriculum exists from entry to completion of the program and includes 14 weeks of in-depth experience in one or more of the focus areas noted above.

The model for the capstone process encourages students to engage in research, program/ product development, scholarly presentations, and publish findings as a part of the educational outcome. The doctoral capstone coordinator is primarily responsible for coordinating placements and monitoring the implementation of practice skills and policies relevant to the capstone culminating project to ensure that evidence-based practice, doctoral-level academic rigor, innovation, fulfillment of standards, and program and leadership development occur. The design of the doctoral capstone experience is consistent with the program's curriculum design and is guided by an expert mentor.