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## The Sammons Center for Innovation and Research in Occupation Based Technology

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## **SAMMONS CENTER**

**FOR INNOVATION AND RESEARCH  
IN OCCUPATION BASED TECHNOLOGY**

The Sammons Center for Innovation and Research in Occupation Based Technology is sponsoring the Winter 2016 issue of *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* (OJOT). The Sammons Center was created in 2013 through the generosity of Dr. Fred Sammons, OTRL, who established an endowment to provide funding for projects designed to promote participation in occupation through the use of technology. The Sammons Center is under the auspices of the Department of Occupational Therapy at Western Michigan University (WMU).

The Sammons Center's guiding philosophy states: "the ability to participate and engage in everyday occupation is a fundamental goal and basic human right for all persons," no matter their physical capabilities. The mission is to "provide a platform for visionaries to promote progress through technology," with the specific purpose to enable an interprofessional team or organization to "create, design, develop, disseminate and evaluate specific products" intended to enhance engagement in occupation through the use of technology

(<https://wmich.edu/occupationtechnologycenter/about>). Technology is ever evolving and has great potential to foster participation in occupations in ways that were not fathomable when the occupational therapy profession was first emerging. Innovation allows progression with a field or construct.

The Sammons Center awards grants between \$1,000 to \$2,500 to support "innovators with ideas for designs for occupation-based technology to help people participate more effectively or independently." Details and application materials are available at its website: <https://wmich.edu/occupationtechnologycenter>. Since the founding of the center, three awards have been granted.

The Sammons Center's namesake, Dr. Fred Sammons, is well known for his multi-dimensional contributions to the field of occupational therapy. With an early background in engineering, his transition to the field of occupational therapy emerged as a result of his strong and persistent commitment to promote engagement in meaningful activities for all individuals. Early in his career, he collaborated with therapists to "design, manufacture, and distribute

adaptive equipment” (Bathje, 2012, p. 2), resulting in his founding of Sammons Preston, Inc., which became the largest worldwide distributor of rehabilitation equipment and supplies. Sammons Preston eventually grew into a multi-million dollar business and is now a part of Patterson Medical, Inc.

In 2012, Dr. Sammons received the Member of the Year Award from AMBUCS (the American Business Clubs), a national charity organization focused on creating mobility and independence for people with disabilities. Dr. Sammons was honored for his many contributions, including his direct involvement in the distribution of AmTrykes, therapeutic bicycles built for people who otherwise could not ride a bike, and his active fundraising for scholarship programs for occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech pathology students. An interesting fact is that Dr. Sammons, knowing the value of technology, provided the American Occupational Therapy Association with its first computer (Bathje, 2012). As a result of his many sustained contributions to the profession, Dr. Sammons received an honorary doctorate degree in occupational therapy from WMU in 1994.

### **References**

Bathje, M. (2012). Fred W. Sammons and Barbara A. Rider: Foundational Sponsors. *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy Sponsor Profiles*. Book 2, <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/sponsorprofiles/2>

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