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Patricia Crist, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA

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## **Sponsor Profile:**

**Patricia Crist, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA**



*The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* (OJOT) is pleased to recognize Patricia Crist, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA, as the sponsor of the Winter 2019 issue. Dr. Crist is an occupational therapist with over 40 years of experience in higher education. She has an extensive history of research, publication, professional leadership, and service to the profession. Dr. Crist is most recognized for her work related to fieldwork education and evaluation. She has received numerous leadership and service awards for her contributions as a practitioner, educator, and scholar. Although recently retired, Dr. Crist remains curious and engaged in several ongoing projects. Dr. Crist's extraordinary career has provided a profound sense of fulfillment in addition to satisfying her artistic and scientific interests.

Dr. Crist developed an early appreciation for art and culture. As a child raised in New Mexico, she spent much of her free time making and selling crafts. "I planned to pursue a degree in art," she said. In high school, Dr. Crist's mother encouraged her to explore a career in occupational therapy. "She was intrigued with the intersection between handiworks and healing after working alongside occupational therapists with the Red Cross during World War II," said Dr. Crist. During her junior year of high school, Dr. Crist's curiosity about the profession was sparked after one of her friends was involved in a tragic off-roading jeep accident. "One day, he shared his experiences in occupational therapy with me," said Dr. Crist. "I found it interesting how arts and crafts were being used therapeutically and as a means of self-expression."

After high school, Dr. Crist earned a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science degree in Occupational Therapy at Colorado State University. Early in her occupational therapy practice, she gained experience in community-based and residential mental-health care settings. "My goal was to find ways to reintegrate my clients into society," she said. Many of her clients had been living in state hospitals for over 20 years. "My goal was to accentuate their abilities and reduce the intrusion of their disabilities," she said. Dr. Crist graduated as a practitioner just as the Kennedy Community Mental Health Act of 1963 was implemented. State hospitals, referred to as "warehouses" at the time, were closing and mental health rehabilitation was stressed. This created new employment opportunities for occupational therapy practitioners. To live independently, Dr. Crist's clients needed access to the least restrictive environments. She aimed to empower her clients by emphasizing their strengths, as well as tempering the environment to facilitate successful community re-engagement. Dr. Crist incorporated expressive media into her treatment sessions to construct behavioral contracts and to help her clients reconstruct healthier patterns. "Art and (re-) establishing self-care habits and routines was part of the essential re-integration journey," she said.

Dr. Crist believes facilitating community engagement at the population level is just as important as empowering individual clients. Creating accessible environments is key at every level. In 2010, Dr. Crist founded Life Enhancement and Accessible Places (LEAP), a company focused on health coaching, accessibility, and consultation. Her approach to health coaching is guided by the principles of LifeStyle Redesign (USC, 2018). Initially, the ADA of 1990 sparked Dr. Crist's interest in accessibility. "The idea transformed into a goal of promoting healthier person-environment interdependence and social sustainability," she said. "I have always wanted to find ways to make the community environment more accessible for people with disabilities, and to facilitate integrated participation for all." During one consultation, Dr. Crist worked with a community organization to design an intergenerational playground that was both meaningful and interesting to people across the lifespan. "Change the community resources and you extend the individual's accessible home into community engagement and social participation," she said. "Both are essential for creating a healthier lifestyle."

In 1974, Dr. Crist transitioned from practitioner to adjunct professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Colorado State University (CSU). She remained at CSU for 14 years, serving as an assistant professor and fieldwork coordinator. In 1988, Dr. Crist completed a Doctorate in Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in educational psychology from the University of Northern Colorado. Her most frequently requested publication, titled "Dr. Mom," modeled a strategic life balance among her roles as a graduate student, young mom, wife, and faculty member. That year, she accepted the position of chair and associate professor in the occupational therapy program at the School of Health Professions at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. From 1992 to 2013, Dr. Crist served as the founding chairperson and professor for the occupational therapy program at the John G. Rangos, Sr. School of Health Sciences at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. While at Duquesne, she established one of the first 5-year entry-level BS/MS occupational therapy educational programs and early weekend programs. Between 2013 and 2018, Dr. Crist served as the founding chair and professor of the Department of Occupational Therapy at Northern Arizona University (NAU). She established one of the initial entry-level Doctor of Occupational Therapy programs.

To show ongoing advocacy for her motto, "Our (faculty, fieldwork educator, peer/consumer) practice is education," Dr. Crist has served in professional leadership roles at the national, state, and local levels for over 30 years. She was on the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Board of Directors and was chair of the Academic Education Special Interest Section (formerly Education SIS) following extensive leadership in the Commission on Education. In 1999, Dr. Crist was elected to the National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) Board of Directors where she later served as president.

Many of Dr. Crist's professional roles have been devoted to the development and improvement of resources for fieldwork educators. She chaired an AOTA ad hoc committee that designed a feasibility study to develop a specialty certification program for fieldwork educators. For over 20 years, she wrote a column for *OT Advance* magazine on issues related to fieldwork in occupational therapy practice. Through her national and international workshops, publications, and leadership, Dr. Crist has provided thousands of fieldwork educators with opportunities for professional development. She has inspired innovative, meaningful learning opportunities for occupational therapy fieldwork students around the world.

Dr. Crist has an impressive history of scholarly research and publication. During her professional tenure, she authored numerous textbooks, chapters, scientific papers, and manuscripts. Much of Dr.

Crist's published work has focused on academic fieldwork, mental health, evaluation, and the professional path for transitioning from occupational therapy practitioner to practice-scholar. She has over 20 invited book chapters in leading publications. Dr. Crist has served on several editorial boards for peer-reviewed journals, including the *Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*, the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *Annals of International Occupational Therapy* (the former *Occupational Therapy International*) and OJOT. She has also completed several invited editorships for special issues of publications devoted to education. Throughout her career, Dr. Crist has participated in the dissemination of research to share her findings through scientific presentations, papers, and posters at regional, national, and international conferences.

The AOTA has acknowledged Dr. Crist with numerous leadership and service awards in recognition of her contributions as a practitioner, educator, and scholar. In 1985, she joined the Roster of Fellows, the AOTA's highest honor recognizing leadership and significant contributions to the growth and development of the profession. Since 1992, she has received seven AOTA service awards and the Recognition of Achievement Award for Meritorious Leadership and Service Celebrating Fieldwork Education. At Duquesne University, Dr. Crist was awarded the Dean's Award for Faculty Excellence in Scholarship and the President's Award for Excellence in Community Service to the Mission. In 2004, she was the recipient of the Stephen L. Heater Award of Outstanding Achievement, the highest honor given by the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association. In 2015, Dr. Crist was initiated into the Leaders and Legacies Society as a founding member.

Through her work at LEAP, Dr. Crist continues to promote the role of occupational therapy in social sustainability. "People often think of dirt, water, and air when they think of environmental sustainability," she said. "We do not necessarily think of these issues from a social perspective." Dr. Crist believes occupational therapists are uniquely equipped with the knowledge and expertise necessary to overcome potential barriers to occupation created by these problems. In 2012, the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) published a position paper that outlined global challenges (e.g., climate change, limited natural resources, decreasing biodiversity, over-population, and inequitable wealth distribution) to environmental sustainability (WFOT, 2012). In 2018, the WFOT published a second paper on sustainability titled "Sustainability Matters: Guiding Principles for Sustainability in Occupational Therapy Practice, Education, and Scholarship". The paper promoted "sustainability as relevant to human occupational performance, making it part of the occupational therapy scope of practice and scholarship" (WFOT, 2018, p. 11). Dr. Crist presented a poster at the WFOT 2018 Congress in Cape Town, South Africa. Her poster was focused on facilitating sustainability in occupational therapy practice through continuing education, application in everyday practice, and conducting research to inform best practice.

Dr. Crist believes the relationship between occupational therapy practice and scholarship is reciprocal. "We are supposed to draw on research evidence in practice; however, most of the available traditional research cannot be applied directly into practice," she said. "How can the richness of everyday practice inform best practice? How can the multitude of daily influences on clinical reasoning better inform traditional research?" Dr. Crist believes every occupational therapy program should produce entry-level practitioners capable of practice scholarship and implementation science.

Dr. Crist understands practice-based research is challenging. She believes challenges to applied scholarship can be overcome through curriculum development, teaching applied research approaches, and the creation of resources that can be integrated seamlessly into everyday practice. Dr. Crist's goal is

to help practitioners learn applied scholarship using the practice-scholar model. She continues to develop the model to help guide practitioners through the process of outcomes studies and dissemination of findings. “Practice-scholarship should inform one’s practice and the profession as much as the traditional evidence-based guidelines,” she said. As one approach to implementation science, Dr. Crist believes the practice-scholar model could help practitioners become more proactive when engaging in practice-based research, especially outcome studies.

Although Dr. Crist has an extensive history of leadership, service, research, and publication, she humbly describes her career as “eclectic.” Since retiring from NAU in July 2018, Dr. Crist has enjoyed spending time with family and friends, traveling, gardening, and re-engaging in arts and crafts activities. As a lifelong learner, Dr. Crist remains curious and engaged in several projects. Her scholarship is focused on social sustainability, further developing the practice-scholar model, curriculum development, and community engagement. She also remains devoted to helping others. As a consultant, Dr. Crist shares her knowledge and expertise to develop and improve educational programs and curriculums. As a certified life coach, she provides mentorship for career development and practitioner-to-faculty transitions and collaborates with faculty members working toward tenure and promotion processes, as well as thesis and dissertation challenges for graduate students.

Dr. Crist’s extraordinary career as an occupational therapist and scholar has satisfied both her artistic and scientific interests. Since her retirement, Dr. Crist has enjoyed reconnecting with her Southwestern roots. “I have always admired the Native American culture and approach to life,” she said. “It has been nice to be back in its midst.” She recently incorporated her love of art, science, and community engagement into an artisans’ fair that runs in collaboration with the Arizona Occupational Therapy Association annual conference. “We tend to celebrate left brain work at our conferences, but we also need to celebrate the right brain work going on in our field,” she said. “After all, the reciprocal relationship between art and science is what brought me into the field of occupational therapy in the first place.”

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