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## The Department of Occupational Therapy at New York Institute of Technology

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# NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## OUR PROGRAM

The Department of Occupational Therapy at New York Institute of Technology (New York Tech) ([https://www.nyit.edu/departments/occupational\\_therapy](https://www.nyit.edu/departments/occupational_therapy)) is committed to advancing the profession of occupational therapy and meeting the unique needs of our local, national, and global communities. Our diverse and complex society warrants an innovative and progressive approach to occupational therapy practice. Our dedicated faculty provide exceptional learning experiences that promote "*doers, makers, and innovators*" in the field. Our students gain real-world practical skills in our on- and off-site labs, participate in hands-on research and clinical experiences, and have the opportunity to explore interdisciplinary learning alongside students from our medical school and our computer science, engineering, and architecture programs.

New York Tech Occupational Therapy Department offers two degree programs to fit the needs of individual students while meeting the demands of the profession. We are proud to offer both a master's (MSOT) and a doctoral degree (OTD) in occupational therapy. Our MSOT program has been fully accredited since 1999 and has recently been reaccredited for 10 years. Our MSOT students are thoroughly prepared to meet the needs and demands of tomorrow's health care and community health environments. At New York Tech, we continue to grow, transform, and adapt to meet societal needs. In 2020, we accepted our first class for our new OTD program. We are the first to offer the new entry-level degree in New York State. Our OTD program is designed to engage students with community stakeholders and prepare students to find their passions; engage in meaningful learning experiences; and become responsible, science, and evidence-based occupational therapists. The mission is to prepare students to become self-directed professionals, innovative problem-solvers, and critical thinkers who base the practice of occupational therapy on evidence and science. In 2022, we are launching an innovative post professional Dr. OT program. The new post professional program will include opportunities for occupational therapists to advance current skills while exploring emerging practice areas.

## OUR FACULTY

**Alexander Lopez**, associate professor and chair of the Occupational Therapy Department. As a licensed attorney and occupational therapist, Dr. Lopez has spent much of his career engaging in grassroots movements to meet the needs of underserved communities. Dr. Lopez's research explores how engagement in physical activities can improve the social, emotional, motor, and process skills in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and developmental disabilities. He also studies the impact of exergaming, virtual reality, and augmented reality on sensory processing and motor performance in young athletes and children with ASD. Dr. Lopez finds great professional and personal satisfaction in the joy of building innovative science and occupation-based programs.

**Melanie Austin-McCain**, assistant professor and assistant chair of Occupational Therapy and Community Relations, is an alumna of NYIT. Dr. Austin's research focuses on wellness; disease prevention; and empowering youth, young adults, women, student-athletes, and vulnerable populations. She is an NIH NHLBI PRIDE Scholar, and she represents NYIT as the NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) and is a faculty associate with New York Tech's Center for Sports Medicine.

**Christina Finn**, associate professor, holds a Doctor of Education in Transformational Leadership from the University of New England and a master's degree in occupational therapy from the University of Scranton. She has extensive experience working with individuals diagnosed with various neurological conditions, with a specialty in post-concussion, visual, vestibular, and perceptual rehabilitation. Dr. Finn's current research interests include the role of occupational therapy in concussion, return to learn, and return to play protocols for students who have sustained a concussion.

**Robert G. Gallagher**, clinical associate professor, earned a Doctor of Chiropractic degree from New York Chiropractic College and a Master of Business Administration from St. John's University. Dr. Gallagher has been teaching in the health sciences and fitness fields for 20 years. His focus has been on anatomy, kinesiology, rehabilitation, and strength and conditioning.

**Pamela Karp**, assistant professor and MSOT Program Director, earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Occupational Therapy from Stony Brook University, her Master in Health Science degree from the University of Florida, and her Doctor of Education degree from Concordia University. Dr. Karp is a Certified Hand Therapist with over 20 years of experience in upper extremity/hand rehabilitation. Her research interests include translation of knowledge focusing on student carryover from classroom to fieldwork and professional practice.

**Michael A. Pizzi**, associate professor, has his Ph.D. in Community Health/Health and Wellness and is the doctoral capstone coordinator at NYIT. Dr. Pizzi has published over 60 chapters and peer-reviewed articles and has lectured nationally and internationally on HIV rehab, hospice and end-of-life care, childhood obesity and health, well-being, and quality of life. Dr. Pizzi is co-owner of Clear Function Rehab, which focuses on mental and behavioral health and well-being issues for all populations.

**Ling Albert**, assistant professor and academic fieldwork coordinator, earned a master's degree in occupational therapy from Stony Brook University and a post professional doctoral degree in occupational therapy from Thomas Jefferson University. She has experience in adult rehabilitation across the spectrum of care, including acute care, inpatient, outpatient, and subacute rehabilitation. Dr. Wan-Albert developed a particular interest in working with individuals with Parkinson's disease and is a Rock Steady Boxing Coach. Her research interests include Parkinson's disease fatigue management protocol and group-based cognitive-behavioral approach.

**Beth Elenko**, associate professor, earned her Bachelors of Science in Occupational Therapy from Eastern Michigan University, her advanced master's and doctoral degrees in applied research in occupational therapy from New York University. Dr. Elenko has brought her continued passion for early intervention practice and research to NYIT. She has presented locally and nationally, is actively involved in AOTA's Early Childhood workgroup, and is a mentor in AOTA's Academic Education Special Interest Section (AESIS) New Educator Mentoring Program (NEMP). She continues to have an active early intervention practice, currently engaging in telehealth practice.

**Mary Squillace**, associate clinical professor, earned her Ph.D. in occupational therapy from Nova Southeastern University and her DrOT, post professional degree, from Temple University. Dr. Squillace specializes in early intervention and the medically complex child. She has published chapters on the topics of prematurity and the occupations of disability and mechanical ventilation. Dr. Squillace has published research on the topic of young adults and pediatric multiple sclerosis and continues her work on future research and manuscripts. She has presented internationally and nationally and is currently active in pediatric telehealth evaluations, interventions, and consultations.