

Occupational Therapy Program Faculty 2025

Giftly Abraham, OTD, OTR/L

Associate Professor



- **Practice area:** Pediatrics
- **Why OT?:** I love being a small part of making a positive impact on individuals in my community
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** Emphasis on teaching; I enjoy interacting with students & building professional relationships
- **Campus Involvement:** Scholarship Committee, Wellness Committee, Curriculum Committee
- **Fun fact:** I love to travel with my husband; my goal is to see 50 states before I am 50

Susan Charnley, DrOT, OTR/L, CHT

Assistant Professor



- **Practice areas:** UE Rehab, Primary Care and Acute Care
- **Favorite OT quote:** “Man, through the use of his hands, as they are energized by mind and will, can influence the state of his own health.” - Mary Reilly
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** Opportunities in the simulation lab
- **Professional Involvement:** NBCOT Continuing Competence Committee, American Society of Hand Therapists Outreach Division
- **Fun fact:** I love to make and eat pickles

Glen S. Cotton, OTD,
OTR/L, HPCS
Associate Professor



- **Practice areas:** Adult neurorehabilitation; incorporating hippotherapy in OT practice
- **Why OT?:** I love how OTs take a holistic approach to understanding our clients' strengths and challenges, and how we creatively incorporate occupation to improve occupational performance and participation.
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** We really get to know our mentees. It's fulfilling to see them expand their knowledge and become confident in their new career.
- **Professional Involvement:** American Hippotherapy Assoc. AOTA CEU consultant
- **Fun fact:** I raised an orphaned Charolais calf that won ribbons at county, regional, and state fairs.

Marquie Curry, OTD, OTR/L

Adjunct Faculty



- **Practice area: Pediatrics/School-Based**
- **Why OT?:** OT aligns with my values to advocate for/with and serve my heart's passions for children and historically marginalized folks.
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** I love the creativity and boundlessness of the students' doctoral capstone projects and internships!
- **Professional Involvement:** I am a member of ILOTA and an OT Entrepreneur, providing OT services to children and students through my company JUSTplay Pediatric Therapy
- **Fun fact:** I love writing short stories and poems!!!

Marissa Dastice, MOT, OTR/L

Adjunct Faculty



- **Practice area:** Adult neuro rehab
- **Why OT?:** I value helping clients in meaningful and practical ways
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** I enjoy the collaboration amongst faculty member and hands on practical labs
- **Professional Involvement:** OT at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab
- **Fun fact:** I have a major in Spanish and studied abroad in Costa Rica

**Susanne Higgins OTD,
OTR/L, CHT**

Associate Professor



- **Practice area:** UE Orthopedics
- **Why OT?:** OTs integrate creativity and expertise in health sciences with knowledge of engagement in occupations
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** Helping students become ready for clinical practice with strong ethical and clinical reasoning
- **Professional Involvement:** ASHT; Teaching CE courses with ILOTA
- **Fun fact:** I love cooking & hanging out with my family

Phyllis V. Hughes, DrOT, OTR/L

Adjunct Faculty



- **Practice Area:** Geriatric/Skilled Nursing
- **Why OT?:** I love that we make a difference in the everyday lives of our clients
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** The faculty collaborates and works well together
- **Professional Involvement:** Fieldwork Coordinator on ILOTA Board; Member of ILOTA Community Outreach Committee- The Committee has been working to introduce OT in underserved communities and increase awareness of OT services
- Provide OT services in ALF with Symbria Rehab and Skilled Nursing and Rehab with Renewal Rehab
- **Fun Fact:** I was born in Belize

Andrea Karr MOT, OTR/L, CAPS

Adjunct Faculty



- **Practice Area:** Adult (Outpatient Neuro Rehab, Home Health, Acute Care)
- **Why OT?:** I love being able to help clients return to the activities they love most.
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** The collaboration between faculty as well as the simulation lab!
- **Professional Involvement:** Outpatient Neuro Rehabilitation at Advocate Christ Medical Center, OT for home health agencies
- **Fun Fact:** I love concerts and have an extensive vinyl collection!

**Anne Kiraly-Alvarez,
OTD, OTR/L, SCSS**

Program Director & Professor



- **Practice area:** School-based practice
- **Why OT?:** It was the perfect blend of my interests in healthcare/medicine and special education
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** Working with our wonderful faculty and staff who are committed to student success!
- **Professional Involvement:** ILOTA Community Outreach & Conference Committees; COTAD-ED
- **Fun fact:** I was born in Saudi Arabia

Lisa Knecht-Sabres, DHS, OTR/L

Professor



- **Practice Area:** Inpatient Rehab & a variety of settings for Older Adults
- **Why OT?:** I value independence; I am able to pursue both of my occupational passions-being a therapist and a professor!
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** The focus at MWU is on excellence in education!
- **Professional Involvement:** Reviewer for numerous professional journals and OT textbook publishing companies
- **Fun fact:** I completed a century (100 mile) bike ride on my 50th Birthday

Mark Kovic, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA

*Professor & Associate Program
Director*



- **Practice area:** Neurorehabilitation & international capacity-bridging
- **Why OT?:** It fits my personality - I consider the context of what we do & our profession embraces this aspect of our daily lives
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** The open-door policy – it is great to be able to welcome students into my office
- **Professional Involvement:** I am a Higher Learning Commission Peer Corp Reviewer
- **Fun fact:** I talk to my plants!

Lisa Mahaffey PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA

Professor



- **Practice area:** Mental Health
- **Why OT?:** I love the opportunity we have as a profession to help create a society that is inclusive of all people
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** Working with my fellow faculty, and the diversity of experience we bring to the program
- **Campus Involvement:** Faculty advisor for SOTA; Project Director on the Tiered Occupational Therapy School Mental Health grant.
- **Fun fact:** I love to go to Packer games (I'm an owner), and teach Mental Health First Aid

Monika Robinson, DrOT, OTR/L

*Associate Professor & Director
of Capstone Development*



- **Practice area:** Home Health
- **Why OT?:** It embraces my values and perspective on living a meaningful life
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** Collaborating and mentoring students—love capstone!
- **Professional Involvement:** L'Arche Board, Co-Chair of ILOTA Home & Community Health SIS; COTAD Capstone Coordinator
- **Fun fact:** My husband and I adopted our first puppy, Georgia, and we're still not sure if we are training her or she's training us...



**Midwestern
University**

**Lydia Royeen, PhD,
OTR/L**

Assistant Professor



- **Practice area:** Primary Care
- **Why OT?:** The interventions and education we provide can have a profound positive effect on the people we interact with
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** As newer faculty it has been wonderful to see the collaborative nature faculty has to provide the best experiences for the students!
- **Professional Involvement:** Journal reviewer for numerous professional journals
- **Fun fact:** I grew up in a log cabin in VA

**Emily K. Simpson,
PhD, OTR/L**

*Professor & Director of Student
Research*



- **Practice area:** Community-based
- **Why OT?:** Its promotion of inclusion aligns with my values related to justice
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** Focus on teaching lets me prioritize teaching and mentorship, which allows me to develop meaningful relationships with students
- **Campus Involvement:** Chair of Admissions; Director of Student Research; Faculty Liaison to Student Ambassadors
- **Fun fact:** I have four younger sisters

Divya Sood, OTD, OTR/L - **Practice area:** Pediatrics; Community Health

Professor



- **Why OT?:** OT is a powerful profession that facilitates participation in occupations
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** Opportunities for interprofessional collaboration with other programs and colleges within MWU
- **Fun fact:** I enjoy cooking, gardening, and spending time with my family

**Abigail Thomas, OTD,
OTR/L**

Adjunct Faculty



- **Practice area:** Pediatrics
- **Why OT?:** I love collaborating with families to maximize potential in children
- **Favorite thing about MWU:** Emphasis on active participation in labs and lectures; I enjoy the opportunity to provide hands on learning in small groups
- **Professional Involvement:** Full Time Pediatric OT at Loyola Medicine, Adjunct Instructor for UIC's Assistive Technology Certificate Program
- **Fun fact:** I enjoy traveling, 3D printing, and going to concerts!