



College of Health Sciences

Occupational Science & Technology

October 27, 2020

Dean Timothy Behrens
College of Health Sciences
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

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RE: Request to Change Name of Department of Occupational Science & Technology to Department of Rehabilitation Sciences & Technology.

Dear Dean Behrens,

On September 1, 2020, the faculty and staff of the Department of Occupational Science & Technology voted, unanimously, to change the department name to "Rehabilitation Sciences and Technology". This revised name better reflects the array of programming offered by the Department which, as of Fall 2020, includes UWM's Physical Therapy, Athletic Training, and Performance Psychology programs, faculty, and staff.

The current department name of "Occupational Science & Technology" (OS&T) was created in 2009 as an acknowledgement that the then Department of "Occupational Therapy" had grown multi-disciplinary and included established certificate programs in Therapeutic Recreation (TR), Assistive Technology and Accessible Design, and Ergonomics in addition to Occupational Therapy (OT). Further, with the addition of new engineering and technology focused faculty, the department anticipated continued diversification of programming and felt that "Occupational Therapy" alone no longer adequately defined the Department's identity, programming, or future.

Since adopting the OS&T name the department has accredited its ATAD certificate program, developed a stand-alone undergraduate degree that is disability and technology focused and established strong research portfolios in Occupational Therapy and Science, Accessible Design, Disability and Mobility, and Ergonomics. The name of OS&T has served the Department's vision well during the past decade of growth and diversification.

Beginning in Fall of 2019 the College of Health Sciences began discussing actionable ways that the rehabilitation-based professional programs in the college could better collaborate and grow. These discussions renewed 5-year-old conversations between Physical Therapy (PT), Athletic Training (AT), and OS&T. Over the summer of 2020 the faculty and staff of PT, AT, and Performance Psychology requested to transfer to the Department of OS&T, and effective Fall 2020 that transfer of faculty and staff was complete.

As a name, "Occupational Science" (OS) is inclusive of this larger array of programs insofar as OS refers to how people pursue activities of daily living that provide meaning and value to their lives. These "occupations" are broad and thus are relevant to the wide range of students, faculty and professions in the now larger Department of OS&T. In this sense, "OS" can be thought of as one of a host of rehabilitation sciences whose theory informs rehabilitation professions. However, "OS" is young (only about 30 years old) and since it grew out of OT it remains nearly synonymous with it. This presents a challenge to the identities and growth of the non-OT and OS programs in the larger department, especially as they look to build strength in our community and beyond.

Changing the name of the Department to: "Rehabilitation Sciences & Technology" (RS&T) much more accurately reflects the array of rehabilitation professions in the department (PT, OT, AT, and TR, in particular) while also being inclusive of the existing and future areas of research excellence, and reflective of the strong technology focus of the department, especially around assistive and therapeutic technologies. We believe this name will better promote the education we provide students and the type of research and service we provide to the community. Further, the name "Rehabilitation Sciences & Technology" is consistent and with and encompasses the missions and visions and values of our full array of programs.

Lastly, the name "Rehabilitation Science(s)" is growing in prominence throughout academia and as such this name might also meet the expectations of future students faculty, and community partners as they seek their own futures. By adding "Technology" to the established "Rehabilitation Sciences" name we distinguish ourselves and draw explicit attention to the multidisciplinary makeup of our Department, the transdisciplinary research we do, and the technology focus of some of our programs.

Sincerely,



Jay M. Kapellusch
Chair, Department of Occupational Science & Technology
College of Health Sciences
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee