

# Perception of Entry-Level OT Educators on Transitioning Into Academia: An Exploration

Karthik Mani, OTD, OTR/L, FACOT, Sarah Reeder

University of Texas Medical Branch, Gaithersburg, MD, USA

DOI: [10.5014/ajot.2023.77S2-PO90](https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2023.77S2-PO90)

Date presented: April 21, 2023

Primary Author and Speaker: Karthik Mani, [kamani@utmb.edu](mailto:kamani@utmb.edu)

**PURPOSE:** The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the employment in the field of occupational therapy (OT) will grow by 17% in the next decade (BLS, 2021). Hence, it is critical to ensure adequate manpower supply through skilled education. OT educators are essential to educate future OTs and are also indispensable for the future of the profession. Literature reveals that the field of OT has been battling the issue of faculty shortage for decades. Identifying and understanding the facilitators and barriers related to transitioning into academia may provide helpful insights to attract and retain talents in OT academia. Hence, this study aims to explore the views of entry level OT educators (<3 years of experience in academia) regarding transitioning into academia.

**DESIGN:** A cross-sectional survey design was used. Participants were recruited by posting the survey invitation on AOTA CommunOT 'Academic Education Special Interest Section' and by mailing the survey invitation to all accredited OT and OT Assistant educational programs in the US.

**METHOD:** Authors developed a custom-designed survey instrument and administered it electronically. Microsoft Excel Toolpak was used to perform quantitative data analyses while the qualitative data obtained through 'open-ended' items were analyzed for themes using NVivo Software.

**RESULTS:** Sixty valid responses were received. Midcareer clinicians with 'terminal degrees' and 'past adjunct teaching or fieldwork supervision experience' appear to be a suitable target for faculty positions. Passion for teaching/research, meaningfulness of work, and intellectual inquisitiveness were the top reasons that encouraged the respondents to choose academia. Majority of respondent's reported inadequate orientation and lack of clarity in expectations post transitioning.

**CONCLUSION:** Universities must offer comprehensive onboarding and mentoring, clarity in expectations, and competitive pay to support and retain talents in academia.

## References

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022, April 29). Occupational therapists: Occupational outlook handbook. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved October 20, 2021, from <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>.
- Chiariello, B., Shaulov, S., Chambers, K., & Ratner, A. (2020). The transition from expert clinician to novice academician: The first three years. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74(4\_Supplement\_1), 7411505122-. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.74S1-PO3026>
- Gustafsson, L., Brown, T., Poulsen, A. A., & McKinstry, C. (2021). Australian occupational therapy academic workforce: An examination of retention, work-engagement, and role overload issues. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 1–11.
- Cosgrove, J. (2006). Faculty perceptions of occupational therapy. *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*, 4(2), 3.