

A Unique Approach to Global Occupational Therapy Education through Academic and Cultural Immersion: The USC Summer Occupational Therapy Immersion Program

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Introduction/Rationale: As our world has become increasingly interconnected, the importance of globally-oriented occupational therapy (OT) education has advanced in recent years, with more universities incorporating international elements into their curricula. In 2014, the University of Southern California Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy launched the *Summer Occupational Therapy Immersion (SOTI)* program, a four-week global program designed for international OT students and practitioners interested in OT practice in the United States.

Objectives: The purpose of this presentation is to discuss programmatic innovations pioneered by the SOTI program that can be applied to other globally-oriented OT educational programs.

Approach: The SOTI program is a unique academic and cultural immersion intended to introduce participants to OT practice, research, and education in the United States, and also to provide participants with a broad picture of OT practice around the world. Core SOTI innovations include: strategic recruitment of a diverse cohort; intensive wrap-around participant support; extended orientation period; investment in community-building; and presentation of an empowered, aspirational view of OT.

Results: The SOTI program has been highly successful and since 2014 has enrolled 134 students from 23 countries. Student satisfaction has been consistently high (9.6/10 satisfaction score), and evaluative comments indicate that SOTI innovations have led to transformational learning experiences for many.

Conclusion: To our knowledge, SOTI is the only internationally-oriented OT program which draws participants from 15-20 countries each year. Its core principles and innovations are rooted in a strong evidence base and are readily adaptable to other global OT programs.