

Conference Presentation Travel Award (CPTA) Statement of Intent

Dear Graduate Professional Council,

I am writing this letter expressing my interest in receiving funding from the Graduate Professional Council in order to attend and present at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Conference in Boston, MA. This is an annual conference where the largest gathering of occupational therapy professionals occurs. Due to my involvement in the Student Occupational Therapy Association, my department is willing to help pay for my registration fee and an additional \$100 for presenting my research.

Occupational therapy is an upcoming field that requires advocacy every day. Occupational therapy is frequently confused with physical therapy and a profession that people think we help people find jobs. In reality, the basic definition of OT is helping others do what they want to do. AOTA is our profession's national conference. It allows an opportunity for OTs around the United States to all be together in one place to listen and learn from each other. This conference allows OTs to continue to be up to date on what the latest research is saying, network with people who have similar interests, and question each other to make sure we are representing our field in the best way possible.

Just the other day, someone in my class shared an article on Facebook explaining what OT is. My grandma commented "so happy physical therapist will be there for me when I get old". This is a prime example of why attending my profession's national conference is so important to me. From this conference, I will learn new ways to advocate for my profession. As a current student, attending this conference is helpful in many ways. At conference, there are workshops I can attend about study strategies for our board exam, I can network with potential employers, and it can help me narrow down what area of OT I am interested in. Lastly, I can attend presentations and research posters on a variety of populations and treatment styles in order to form my own opinions and decisions about how I want to practice.

Next time you are in a room of a bunch of people writing, look around and see how each person holds their writing utensil. I guarantee that there will be a large variety of ways, yet everyone's writing is legible, and they have been able to live a successful life. This is what the research I will be presenting at conference shows. Two of my professors decided they were having too many handwriting referrals so they created a handwriting assessment called the Just Write! This tool looks at a child's ability to write their name, how they hold their pencil, and upper case and lower case letter accuracy. The children are asked to write their name and as many upper and lower case letters as possible. They are not penalized for not writing a letter, only if they attempt a letter and it is not legible. My group and I focused on achieving reliability for this tool to assist in the process of getting it published. Our research demonstrates how we achieved interrater reliability (all raters agreed with the gold standard with at least 90% accuracy in all sections of the assessment) and how grasp and letter accuracy are not correlated. Showing that grasp is not correlated with letter accuracy is a huge finding in our field because many OTs are stuck on fixing a child's grasp in order to improve their handwriting. However, our research shows that grasp is not as important as people think it is. These findings will allow OTs, especially school-

based OTs, to focus more on other things that kids need assistance with to live more successful lives such as, play skills, socialization, and being in the same classroom as peers.

Presenting this research at AOTA and not just our state conference is necessary because this is a problem occurring across the world and not just in Missouri. Since the largest gathering of OTs occurs at this annual conference, we want to present our findings here to get our message across to as many OTs as possible. As a student, attending this specific conference is also an experience like no other. This conference is a reminder of why I fell in love with the profession and why all the hard work of graduate school is worth it.

Thank for your consideration and please reach out if you have any additional questions at [student's email](#) or student's phone number.

Sincerely,

Student's Name

Department of Occupation Therapy

University of Missouri