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A Survey of Occupational Therapy Program Leaders: Perceptions of the Essential Elements for Early Career Faculty

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Abstract

The rapid growth of academic occupational therapy programs in the United States, combined with an increase in senior faculty retirement, requires a new, growing, robust and well-prepared faculty workforce. In addition to the growth of programs, faculty shortages necessitate proactive strategies for preparing transitioning clinicians for successful academic careers. Faculty development training should be a part of preparation to ensure success of early career faculty. However, it is unknown what the perceptions of occupational therapy leaders are towards faculty development training, what components should be included in training, and the importance of these components. Through this survey research, key findings highlight the critical importance of various content areas for early career faculty success. University governance, Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) accreditation standards, teaching responsibilities, student assessment, academic advising, and interprofessional collaborative practice were identified as critical areas for faculty understanding, with personnel issues and scholarship ranking as lowest importance. These findings underscore the significance of practical teaching and administrative skills within occupational therapy education, while indicating potential areas for further scholarship development. This research emphasizes occupational therapy education leaders' views about the importance of investing in faculty development for early career occupational therapy faculty. Knowledge in these areas not only prepares educators to shape the future of the profession, but also enhances their adaptability to changing educational landscapes. Faculty development contributes to job satisfaction, retention, and the integration of clinical expertise into academia. Ultimately, it empowers faculty to excel in their roles and advances the field of occupational therapy education and practice. Development and implementation of a robust early career faculty development training model is needed.

Keywords

Faculty development, occupational therapy education, occupational therapy faculty, early career faculty

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Occupational Therapy Education Leaders' Perceptions of Essential Faculty Development for New Educators

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of academic occupational therapy programs in the United States, combined with an increase in senior faculty retirement, requires a new, growing, robust and well-prepared faculty workforce. In addition to the growth of programs, faculty shortages necessitate proactive strategies for preparing transitioning clinicians for successful academic careers. Faculty development training should be a part of preparation to ensure success of early career faculty. However, it is unknown what the perceptions of occupational therapy leaders are towards faculty development training, what components should be included in training, and the importance of these components. Through this survey research, key findings highlight the critical importance of various content areas for early career faculty success. University governance, Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) accreditation standards, teaching responsibilities, student assessment, academic advising, and interprofessional collaborative practice were identified as critical areas for faculty understanding, with personnel issues and scholarship ranking as lowest importance. These findings underscore the significance of practical teaching and administrative skills within occupational therapy education, while indicating potential areas for further scholarship development. This research emphasizes occupational therapy education leaders' views about the importance of investing in faculty development for early career occupational therapy faculty. Knowledge in these areas not only prepares educators to shape the future of the profession, but also enhances their adaptability to changing educational landscapes. Faculty development contributes to job satisfaction, retention, and the integration of clinical expertise into academia. Ultimately, it empowers faculty to excel in their roles and advances the field of occupational therapy education and practice. Development and implementation of a robust early career faculty development training model is needed.

Introduction

There has been tremendous growth in occupational therapy (OT) education programs over the last decade, including the transition of many OT master's programs to OT doctorate programs, according to the latest American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA, 2018) report. In addition to the growing number of programs, OT faculty retirement projections indicate a needed increase of 35% in faculty by 2024 (Lockhart-Keene & Potvin, 2018). This growth in academic programs reflects the increasing need for additional faculty, including those with doctoral training, within OT education. These factors have impacted faculty vacancy rates, leaving OT programs with faculty shortages (Harvison, 2022). This concern is not new to the profession, but rather is resurfacing (Jantzen, 1973). For these reasons, transitioning clinicians into teaching positions is imperative to sustain the growth of academic OT programs (Schneider, 2021); however, clinicians may lack the required education and experience to enter academia.

The indication that faculty shortages are being influenced by the lack of academic experience or training is important to note. The need for specialized training for faculty in OT education is not new. Jantzen discussed this idea in much detail in her 1973 Slagel Lecture (Jantzen, 1973). However, the academic landscape has changed significantly since 1973. There remains a contemporary need for enhanced preparation by OT practitioners to assume a career in academia (Foy, 2017). Clinicians transitioning to the academic environment may not have the necessary skills (teaching, scholarship, and service) to be successful in a full-time faculty position, and they require distinct training and development approaches to optimize their contributions to OT education (Falzarano & Zipp, 2012). This concern has been echoed, indicating key concerns about the lack of availability of qualified OT educators as well as faculty recruitment issues (Fisher et al., 2017). The advanced preparation needed to assume a role as faculty includes professional development, scholarship, academic culture, classroom management, and mentoring (Foy, 2017).

Occupational therapy faculty report that the greatest challenges within the academic environment include course design and implementation, which is inherently lacking among OT practitioners without academic teaching experience (Gustafsson et al., 2023; McKinstry et al., 2020; Mitcham et al., 2002; Sparks-Keeney & Jirikowic, 2020). Currently, only 31% of OT faculty report feeling adequately prepared for teaching in their first year (Sweetman & Giles, 2023). Lack of confidence and experience with scholarship among junior faculty have also been shown as reasons to contemplate leaving academia (Gustafsson et al., 2023; McKinstry et al., 2020; Stoykov et al., 2017). There is evidence that indicates the need for new faculty to be supported on multiple levels through support and sharing of ideas by peers, participation in mentoring programs and instructional seminars, and protected time for research (Helgøy et al., 2021; Ordinetz, 2009). Most new faculty receive some type of mentoring (Falzarano & Zipp, 2012), but is mentoring alone enough to ensure success?

Studies within OT education recommend that the profession adopt an approach for systematic planning and completion of a wide range of faculty development activities needed by academicians (Mitcham et al., 2002; Mitcham & Gillette, 1999). The United States (US) is not alone in the need to bolster their OT education workforce. Studies in Australia indicate a need to build qualified academic faculty to meet current and future academic needs (Gustafsson et al., 2023; McKinstry et al., 2020). Studies also indicate a need to attract recent OT graduates into academia and to support them through career development strategies to build their academic career success (Gustafsson et al., 2023; McKinstry et al., 2020).

Occupational therapy educators face a longstanding challenge in receiving adequate training to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom (AOTA, 2018). Within healthcare education, faculty development has been cited as not a luxury but as an imperative, requiring a systematic approach including planning, implementation, and evaluation (McLean et al., 2008). Faculty development programs must address this gap, ensuring educators are well-prepared to deliver high-quality education. In order to create a faculty development program, input from OT education leaders is needed to identify the key areas that are essential for early career faculty. While feedback and perspectives from early career OT faculty have been studied (Helgøy et al., 2021; Ordinetz, 2009; Sweetman & Giles, 2023), OT education leaders are knowledgeable about Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) requirements, have experience in teaching, service, and scholarship, and have experience with mentorship.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gather input from OT education leaders on their views on the need for faculty development, the necessary components of faculty development, and their importance. The essential elements identified from this cross-sectional survey are intended to inform a future faculty development program for OT and other health profession educators. This aim informs the research question, “what are the essential elements of a faculty development program for OT educators?”.

Methodology

Survey Development

This cross-sectional survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) on early career faculty development was originally developed to gather data from Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program leaders (MacCabe & Cummer, 2021). The original survey was developed by review of the current literature, physical therapy program accreditation requirements, and expert opinion. Modification of the original survey was completed to allow for use in OT education. A literature review of faculty development in healthcare education was completed to determine common areas of focus for early career faculty needs and faculty development training (Behar-Horenstein et al., 2012; Leslie et al., 2013; Rothman & Rinehart, 1990; Salamh et al., 2019; Steinert et al., 2016). National accreditation requirements were reviewed, and lastly expert opinion from OT faculty (KH) was used to develop the final survey for use in OT education. Occupational

therapy faculty experience (KH) included many leadership roles in OT programs and academia as program director, department chair, and dean. The survey took participants approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Through these processes, the following content areas of potential importance were identified to be included in the original survey: university governance, personnel issues, ACOTE standards, scholarship, learning theory, teaching responsibilities, student assessment, academic advising, and interprofessional collaborative practice (see Table 1).

Survey

The final version of the survey was formatted for use in REDCap (v13.7.6) and consisted of 61 separate items in the above-mentioned nine content areas. The survey included a variety of elements (see Table 1) and can be viewed in detail in the appendices (see Appendix 1). The survey items included demographic data including participants' years in their role, years worked as an OT, type of institution where their program resided, number of core faculty, number of vacancies and time to fill open positions, and geographical location. Respondents were asked to "Please indicate the level of importance for the following areas" or simply put, the need for early career faculty to have knowledge of the content areas included in the survey (university governance, personnel issues, ACOTE, scholarship, learning theory, teaching responsibilities, student assessment, academic advising, and interprofessional collaborative practice; see Table 1). Importance quantity indicators were collected using a Likert scale, ranging from not important (scored 0) to very important (scored 3) for each item. Lastly, respondents were asked to report what faculty development resources were available at their institution (e.g. teaching and learning center). All survey questions were required for submission.

Table 1

Survey Content Areas and Questions

Content Area	**Rate the level of importance for the following content areas:**
University governance	
	Classification and Structure of Academic Institutions, Academic Legal and Ethical Issues, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, Title IX), Academic Freedom, Service/Committee Work, Student Accommodation/Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
Personnel Issues	
	Workload, Faculty Rank, Promotion and Tenure, Sabbatical Leave, Development of Academic Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Scholarship Form, Self-Evaluation, Peer and Program Director Evaluation

ACOTE	
	ACOTE's Role, ACOTE Standards, ACOTE's Definitions and Maintenance of Contemporary Practice, Self-Study Process and Role as Faculty, Program Assessment and Outcomes, Strategic Planning
Scholarship	
	CITI training, Institutional Review Board (IRB), Grant Writing, Networking, Critical Appraisal of the Literature, Research Design/Types of Research, Data Analysis, Scientific Writing, Mentoring Student's Capstone/Research
Learning Theory	
	Science of Teaching and Learning: Learning Theory, Student Learning Strategies
Teaching Responsibilities	
	Curriculum Design, Course Design, Engaging Students, Active Learning Strategies, Technology Resources, Teaching Methodology
Student Assessment	
	Exam Writing Skills, Exam Metric Analysis, Development of Assignment, Rubric Development for Assignments, Development of Practicals, Rubric Development for Practicals, Readiness for Full Time Clinical Education, Remediation
Academic Advising	
	Advising Responsibilities, Establishing Student/Faculty Relationships, Setting Boundaries, Facilitating Leadership, Coaching for Success, Student Crisis Management
Interprofessional Collaborative Practice	
	Interprofessional Collaborative Practice (competencies, debriefing skills, etc.)

FERPA= family educational rights and privacy act, ADA= Americans with Disabilities Act, CV= curriculum vitae, ACOTE= Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, CITI= collaborative institutional training initiative, IRB= institutional review board

Survey Distribution

Inclusion criteria included any current or developing OT program irrespective of the academic level of the program. Exclusion criteria were OT assistant programs. The survey was sent via email to OT program directors for programs within the US. Contact information was identified using the ACOTE website, including master's levels, doctorate level, and developing programs (ACOTE, 2023). Contact information for program directors was compiled and verified to develop an inclusive list with contact information for all OT programs. The survey was emailed in early October 2022 and a reminder email was sent each week (every seven days) to encourage participation. After no further survey responses were received the survey was closed. The survey was available for a total of 17 days. Responses were anonymous, and no identifying

information was collected during the completion of the survey. The study was reviewed by the University of Washington Institutional Review Board and determined to be exempt from requiring informed consent for participation. Participants were provided information regarding the purpose of the project, risks, benefits, and elements of the survey, and that participation in the survey was voluntary. A STROBE checklist was used to ensure survey development and reporting of results met the highest quality for survey research (Von Elm et al., 2007).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed using Microsoft Excel (Microsoft 365) to calculate descriptive statistics. Means, standard deviations, and ranges were calculated for demographic variables to describe the respondents. Responses on the Likert scale were tallied for each item, and responses were counted for those who responded for each score of “very important” (3), “important” (2), “somewhat important” (1) or “not important" (0). Means and percentage scores were calculated for each individual item as well as for each of the nine content areas; this allowed for comparison of individual items within a content area, but also for making comparisons between the content areas (e.g. University Governance vs. Learning Theory). Mean scores for individual items ranged from 0 to 3, and percentages were calculated based on the total responses. If a response was missing for a specific item, then the percentage scores were calculated by the total number of reported responses (i.e. out of 54 instead of 55 total responses). Two participants failed to complete the survey in its entirety, however because their responses were largely completed, their data were still included for analysis. A total of three questions, between the two individuals, in the areas of scholarship and ACOTE were missed.

Results

Demographic Information

Of the 351 programs invited to participate in the survey (186 OT doctorate, 165 OT masters), 55 program leaders completed the survey with a response rate of 16%. Respondents were not asked which academic level their program was (e.g. Doctorate or Masters). Demographic descriptions of survey respondents and their programs can be seen in Table 2. The type of institutions represented varied and 18% (10 out of 55) of respondents reported more than one institutional description. Ten programs reported the Carnegie Classification of R1 institutions and three reported R2 status. Most programs were either public universities (n=17) or private not-for-profit institutions (n=17). The geographic location of participants varied throughout the US, with the largest contribution from programs in the southern US (42%), followed by midwestern US (24%), northeastern US (18%), and western US (16%).

Table 2

Demographics of Respondents and OT Programs

Item	**R1 Institutions** (n=10)	**All Other Programs** (n=45)	**Total** (n=55)
Respondents Leadership Positions (count, number of individuals)	PD= 8 Dual Chair/Dean and PD= 2 Chair= 1 Past PD= 1	PD= 35 Dual Chair/Dean and PD= 9 Chair= 5 Past PD= 3 Did not identify= 2	PD= 43 Dual Chair/Dean and PD= 11 Chair= 6 Past PD= 4 Did not identify= 2
Time in education (yrs, mean ± SD)	16.85 ± 6.19 Range: 8 - 26	14.23 ± 7.54 Range: 4 - 35	14.7 ±7.33 Range: 4 - 35
Time in leadership (yrs, mean ± SD)	6.35 ± 6.85 Range: 1 - 20.5	6.66 ± 6.28 Range: 0.5 - 28	6.6 ± 6.32 Range: 0.5 - 28
Core Faculty (count, number of individuals)	8.5 ± 4.25 Range: 4 - 18	7.16 ± 4.89 Range: 2 - 26	7.4 ± 4.77 Range: 2 - 26
Faculty Vacancies (count, number of vacancies)	1.4 ± 0.70 Range: 0 - 2	1.11 ± 1.60 Range: 0 - 8	1.16 ± 1.48 Range: 0 - 8
Time to fill faculty vacancies (months, mean ± SD)	8.50 ± 5.56 Range: 2 - 18	5.69 ± 4.70 Range: 0-24	6.2 ± 4.93 Range: 0 - 24
Type of Institution (count for each descriptor)	R1= 10 Public = 2	R2= 3 Doctoral or Professional Universities= 3 Public= 15 Private for Profit= 5 Private, NFP= 17 Liberal Arts College= 5 Faith-Based Institution= 8 Did not identify= 2	R1= 10 R2= 3 Doctoral or Professional Universities= 3 Public= 17 Private for Profit= 5 Private, NFP= 17 Liberal Arts College= 5 Faith-Based Institution= 9 Did not identify= 2

PD= program director, yrs=years, SD=standard deviation, NFP= not-for-profit

Areas of Faculty Development

Over three-quarters of respondents (≥79%) ranked all nine content areas as either "important" or "very important" for early career faculty. Most respondents (≥95%) ranked several categories as very important or important: teaching responsibilities (97%), student assessment (95%) and academic advising (95%). Two content areas ranked lower were personnel issues (81%) and scholarship (79%). Specific information regarding items and responses is presented in the subsequent paragraphs. Specific scores for each of the content areas and individual items can be found in Appendix 2.

University Governance

The six items in this section examined the importance of Classification and Structure of Academic Institutions, Academic Legal and Ethical Issues, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, Title IX), Academic Freedom, Service/Committee work, and Student Accommodation/ADA. The average score for all university governance items was 2.41 out of 3, and 88% of respondents reported this content to be "important" (34%) or "very important" (54%).

Personnel Issues

The seven items in this section examined the importance of Workload, Faculty Rank, Promotion and Tenure, Sabbatical Leave, Development of Academic Curriculum Vitae and Scholarship Form, Self- Evaluation, and Peer and Program Director Evaluation. The average score for this area was 2.17 out of 3, and 81% of respondents reported this content to be "important" (39%) or "very important" (42%). Items that received low ranking of "not important" included faculty rank (2%), promotion and tenure (9%), sabbatical leave (27%), and self-evaluation (2%).

ACOTE Accreditation Standards

The six items in this section examined the importance of ACOTE's Role, ACOTE Standards, ACOTE's Definitions and Maintenance of Contemporary Practice, Self-Study Process and Role as Faculty, Program Assessment and Outcomes, and Strategic Planning. The average score for this area was 2.61 out of 3, and 94% of respondents ranked this content to be "important" (27%) or "very important" (67%).

Scholarship

The nine items in this section examined the importance of CITI Training, Institutional Review Board (IRB), Grant Writing, Networking, Critical Appraisal of the Literature, Research Design/Types of Research, Data Analysis, Scientific Writing, and Mentoring Students' Capstone/Research. The average score for this area was 2.17 out of 3, and 79% of respondents ranked these items to be "important" (37%) or "very important" (42%). Each item had one or more respondents that ranked the item as "not important," with grant writing (11%) as the lowest rank for importance.

Learning Theory

The two items about learning theory examined the importance of The Science of Teaching and Learning: Learning Theory, and Student Learning Strategies. The average score for this area was 2.52 out of 3, and most respondents (94%) ranked these items to be “important” (37%) or “very important” (57%). No respondent ranked either of these items as “not important.”

Teaching Responsibilities

The six items in this content area examined the importance of teaching responsibilities, including knowledge of Curricular Design, Course Design, Engaging Students, Active Learning Strategies, Technology Resources, and Teaching Methodology. The average score for this area was 2.70 out of 3, and most respondents (97%) ranked this as “important” (25%) or “very important” (72%). This content was ranked the highest, and no respondents ranked any of the items as “not important.”

Student Assessment

The eight items in this content area examined the importance of Exam Writing Skills, Exam Metric Analysis, Development of Assignments, Rubric Development for Assignments, Development of Practicals, Rubric Development for Practicals, Readiness for Full Time Clinical Education, and Remediation. The average score for this area was 2.53 out of 3, and most respondents (95%) ranked this area as “important” (36%) or “very important” (59%).

Academic Advising

These six items examined the importance of Advising Responsibilities, Establishing Student/Faculty Relationships, Setting Boundaries, Facilitating Leadership, Coaching for Success, and Student Crisis Management. The average score for the items in this area was 2.54 out of 3, and most respondents (95%) ranked this area as “important” (37%) or “very important” (58%).

Interprofessional Collaborative Practice

There was one item that examined the importance of Interprofessional Education about Collaborative Practice Competencies and Debriefing Skills. The average score for this area was 2.29 out of 3, and most respondents (88%) ranked this area as “important” (44%) or “very important” (44%).

Faculty Development Resources

When asked “*What resources does your department have/employ for faculty development?”* respondents reported the following: 73% indicated having a teaching and learning center at their institution, 71% provided department mentors, 29% indicated having some type of faculty training, and 9% reported there were no formal resources for faculty development. Most respondents reported having multiple resources at their disposal; however, 18% of respondents reported only having one of these resources. A large majority of respondents (71%) indicated they were in support of their early career faculty attending an online faculty development series, 27% indicated maybe, and only one respondent reported no interest (2%).

Discussion

This study examined the perspectives of program leaders in OT education to better understand views on the essential knowledge and skills that early career faculty should possess.

Our results indicate that program leaders emphasized the significance of topics related to university governance, ACOTE accreditation standards, teaching responsibilities, student assessment, academic advising, and interprofessional collaborative practice. The highest-ranking content area was teaching responsibilities (97%), including items about curricular design, student engagement, active learning strategies, teaching methodology, and technology. These are important skills for early career faculty to master, especially those new to the academic classroom environment. The next highest-ranking areas included student assessment (95%), academic advising (95%), and learning theory (94%), all essential skills for early career faculty. This makes sense that OT program leaders would see these as important skills, as ACOTE requires continuous self-assessment of OT programs by faculty (ACOTE, 2023). ACOTE (94%) was also ranked highly in terms of importance for early career faculty. Learning the requirements of the accrediting body of OT education is likely a new area for clinicians transitioning to academia, however ACOTE knowledge will enhance the quality of the program by ensuring that standards are met and maintained. It should also be noted that assumptions were made that since all programs are required to follow ACOTE standards, sound pedagogy was used throughout each program's curriculum. This is implied since using sound pedagogy as a template will ensure that ACOTE standards are met.

Notably the lowest ranking content areas, personnel issues (81%) and scholarship (79%) still had more than three-quarters of respondents who considered these to be important. The items lower in importance within these content areas included sabbatical and grant writing, areas that many respondents reported as "not important" or only "somewhat important." These findings collectively align with the broader educational context, reflecting a strong emphasis on the need to acquire and develop practical teaching and administrative skills within OT programs, while suggesting potential areas for further exploration and development in the realm of scholarship.

We identified a significant percentage (>70%) of OT programs with resources for faculty development, such as teaching and learning centers and department mentors. Yet, <30% reported having some type of faculty training, and 9% reported having no faculty development resources at all. Although many programs reported having these resources, we did not specifically ask if these resources were utilized or not. These findings align with the current evidence reporting many OT faculty feel unprepared for their first year in academia, suggesting the need for more mentoring and training (Helgøy et al., 2021; Ordinetz, 2009; Sweetman & Giles, 2023). This also suggests that the current, most commonly reported resources available (teaching and learning centers and department mentors), may not be enough to ensure success for new faculty. This is most likely why a considerable majority of program leaders (98%) expressed support or interest for faculty to attend an online faculty development series, highlighting a

willingness to adapt to new modes of professional development. These findings underscore the importance of continued investment in faculty development and the need for tailored strategies to meet the specific needs of OT educators, especially in the context of evolving educational demands and practices.

One critical implication of this research is the necessity to prepare transitioning early career faculty for successful academic careers. Our results note that leaders view professional development to a high degree of importance, yet it is surprising to see that promotion and tenure, faculty rank, and self-evaluation ranked low in the area of personnel in our study. These are all key areas that assist with success in academia. It is not sufficient for faculty candidates to rely solely on their passion for teaching and large university resources like a teaching and learning center; early career faculty require comprehensive support and training to excel in the academic environment. This is also an expectation of ACOTE:

> … as part of the onboarding process for early career faculty, each faculty must possess the academic and experiential qualification and background necessary to meet program objectives and demonstrate documented expertise in their area(s) of teaching responsibility and knowledge of the content delivery method (ACOTE, 2023).

To meet these needs, OT programs should consider implementing systematic faculty development activities. As per the findings of this study, few programs are currently doing this. The authors recommend that faculty development training promote the development of educators to create competent, caring practitioners through improved student learning, providing educators with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes for success within the classroom (McLean et al., 2008). Faculty development must be tailored to the needs of the discipline, should be realistic and measurable, and should strive for collaboration across health professions (McLean et al., 2008). Based on the findings of this study, these activities should cover a wide range of essential skills and competencies needed by academicians, including course design, classroom management, and student assessment and advising. Although scholarship was ranked the lowest of all areas of importance, 79% of all program leaders still believed this to be an area of importance for early career faculty. This was uniquely higher at R1 institutions compared to the rest of the respondents, where 85% believed scholarship to be important or very important, compared to 77% of the remaining institutions; however, small sample size limited further investigation in this area. This difference in institutional level is likely due to the additional expectations and requirements of very high scholarship productivity at R1 institutions. Additionally, the literature suggests the potential benefit of recruiting experienced academicians from other fields to support OT education (Steinert et al., 2016). This interprofessional approach to faculty development could enrich the academic environment and bring fresh perspectives to OT education.

Additionally, training in the areas of pedagogy in research doctorate programs (e.g. Ph.D, Sc.D), would better prepare future OT faculty to not only develop strong research agendas, but to be prepared to teach when they enter faculty positions. Faculty development contributes significantly to faculty job satisfaction and retention. Institutions

that invest in the professional growth and well-being of their faculty members are more likely to foster a supportive and nurturing academic environment (Varnado et al., 2021). This, in turn, can lead to increased faculty morale, productivity, and long-term commitment to the institution. Moreover, faculty development can bridge the gap between academia and clinical practice. Early career OT faculty members often have valuable clinical expertise, and with appropriate training, they can effectively integrate their real-world experiences into the classroom. This not only enriches the educational experience for students but also enhances the relevance of academic programs to current healthcare needs.

Limitations

There are several limitations to our study. The OT survey was not piloted specifically with OT program leaders or educators prior to data collection, however since a similar survey was utilized in DPT education, our research team felt the survey was sufficiently reviewed. Another limitation of this study is the low response rate from OT program leaders. A response rate of 16% may not provide a comprehensive picture of what is important broadly across OT program leaders in the US. Differences may exist between master's and doctorate program leaders, as well as at different levels of institution (private vs. public and R1 vs. R2). A limitation of our survey questionnaire was the way in which we asked about the type of institution. The survey was set up so that individuals could use as many descriptors as necessary to describe their institution, (e.g. R1, public, liberal arts, etc.). Unfortunately, this resulted in unclear representation of the Carnegie Classification for each respondent. Therefore, further analysis based on institution level could not be completed. Although our survey asked respondents about their current faculty development resources at their institutions we did not directly ask if leaders encouraged or required early career faculty to utilize them. Having many resources available is unhelpful if they are not used. Additionally, the Likert scale utilized in the survey may have resulted in a ceiling effect as noted with many areas reporting high scores. The survey also did not allow for open ended responses for leaders to input additional areas of importance not included in the survey.
Because of these limitations, further research is needed in the area of faculty development for OT educators. A deeper assessment of expectations based on institutional level and program level is needed, with a larger response rate from programs across the US. Development and assessment of early career faculty development training programs for OT and other health professions (e.g., physical therapy) is needed. Lastly, assessment of current faculty development programs is also needed to determine effectiveness in preparing faculty for the roles and responsibilities of academia.

Implications for Occupational Therapy Education

Early career OT faculty members play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the profession. They are tasked with educating the next generation of OT practitioners and researchers, who will, in turn, impact the health and well-being of countless individuals across various settings. Therefore, the teaching effectiveness and competence of these faculty members is paramount. Secondly, the contemporary academic landscape is characterized by rapid changes in pedagogical approaches, technological

advancements, and evolving accreditation standards, not to mention institutional requirements. Early career faculty members must be well-prepared to adapt to these changes and to contribute to the ongoing improvement of OT education. Faculty development training programs are needed to provide faculty new to the academic environment with opportunities to enhance their teaching methodologies, integrate innovative technologies, and align their curriculum with the latest evidence-based practices.

Conclusion

This research has explored the views of OT leaders on the important elements for early career OT faculty development. It is clear that OT leaders have identified faculty development in a variety of key areas necessary in order to equip early career faculty with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the ever-evolving academic environment. This is paramount in OT education, given the increase in distance education offerings, growing number of programs, and increase in faculty vacancies, to ensure that faculty are adequately trained. Our analysis has illuminated areas of faculty development that also underscore the significance of investing in faculty development training programs to prepare and support qualified and effective faculty educators in OT education programs.

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Appendix 1

Survey sent to Occupational Therapy Leaders

OT PD Survey

Record ID	_____
Please identify your role/title within your Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program.	☐ Dean ☐ Chair ☐ Program Director ☐ None of the Above
Please identify the number of years you have worked in Occupational Therapy Education to the nearest half year.	_____
Please identify the number of years you have served in your leadership role (dean, chair, director), to the nearest half year.	_____
Please indicate the type of institution. (Check all that apply)	☐ R1 Doctoral Institution ☐ R2 Doctoral Institution ☐ D/PU Doctoral/Professional University ☐ Public University ☐ Private for Profit ☐ Private NOT for Profit ☐ Liberal Arts College ☐ Faith-Related Institution
Please indicate the number of core faculty in your program.	_____
Please indicate the current number of vacancies for core faculty in your program.	_____
Please indicate the average number of months to fill your department's last core faculty vacancy.	_____
What is the geographical location of your University.	○ Northeastern United States (ME, CT, MA, NH, RI, VT, NJ, NY, PA) ○ Midwest United States (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI, IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD) ○ Southern United States (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, DC, W VA, AL, KY, MS, TN, AR, LA, OK, TX) ○ Western United States (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY, AK, CA, HI, OR, WA) ○ US territories (PR, USVI, Guam) ○ Outside the United States

The following questions address content related to University Governance. Please indicate the level of importance for the following content areas.

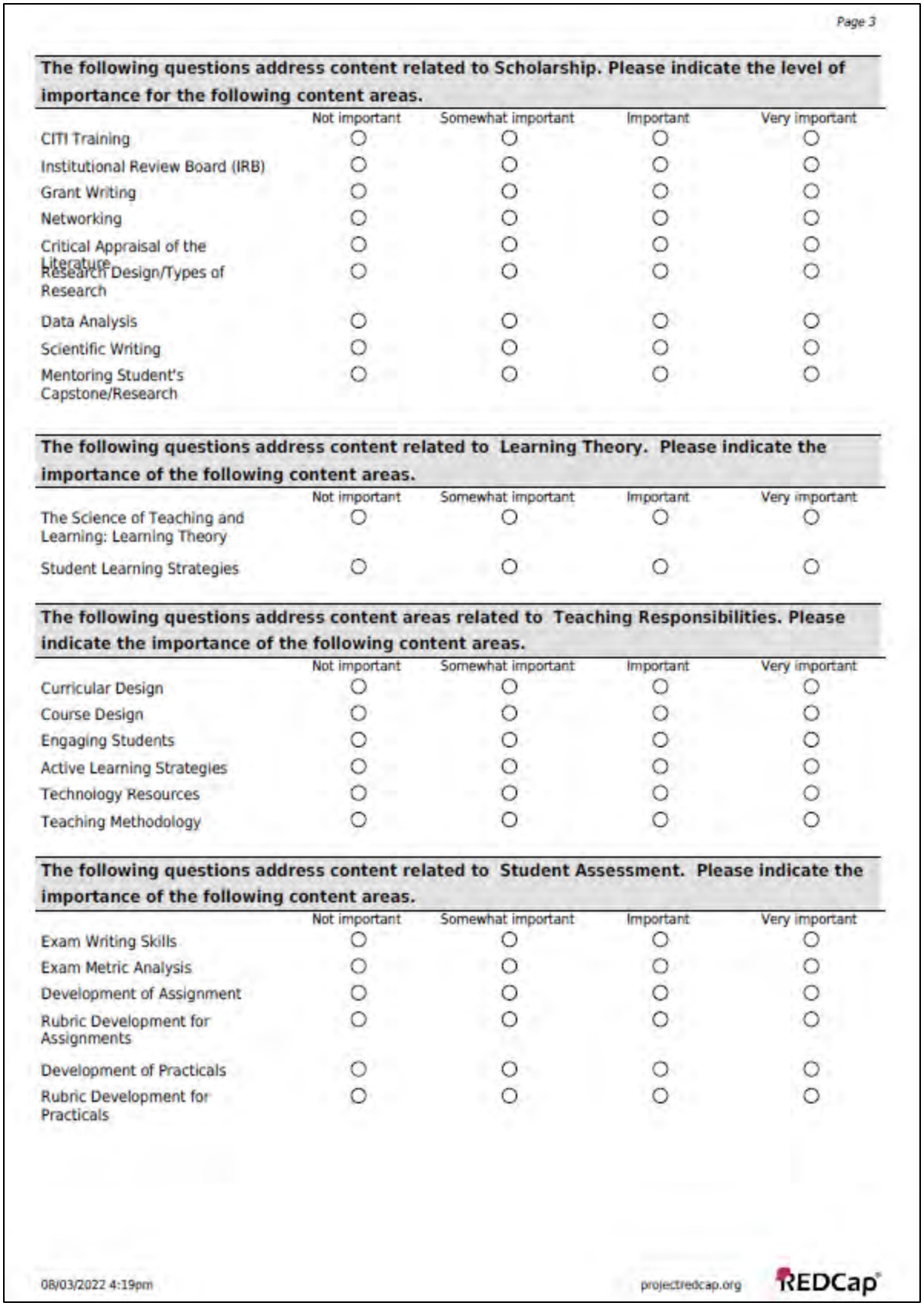
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Classification and Structure of Academic Institutions	○	○	○	○
Academic legal and ethical issues	○	○	○	○
Federal Education Law (FERPA, Title IX)	○	○	○	○
Academic Freedom	○	○	○	○
Service/Committee work	○	○	○	○
Student Accommodation/ADA	○	○	○	○

The following questions address content related to Personnel Issues. Please indicate level of importance for the following content areas.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Workload	○	○	○	○
Faculty Rank	○	○	○	○
Promotion and Tenure	○	○	○	○
Sabbatical Leave	○	○	○	○
Development of Academic Curriculum Vitae and Scholarship Form	○	○	○	○
Self-Evaluation	○	○	○	○
Peer and Program Director Evaluation	○	○	○	○

The following questions address content related to ACOTE. Please indicate the level of importance for the following content areas.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
ACOTE's Role	○	○	○	○
ACOTE standards	○	○	○	○
ACOTE's definition and maintenance of Contemporary Practice	○	○	○	○
Self-study Process and Role as Faculty	○	○	○	○
Program Assessment and Outcomes	○	○	○	○
Strategic Planning	○	○	○	○



Page 3

The following questions address content related to Scholarship. Please indicate the level of importance for the following content areas.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
CITI Training	○	○	○	○
Institutional Review Board (IRB)	○	○	○	○
Grant Writing	○	○	○	○
Networking	○	○	○	○
Critical Appraisal of the Literature	○	○	○	○
Research Design/Types of Research	○	○	○	○
Data Analysis	○	○	○	○
Scientific Writing	○	○	○	○
Mentoring Student's Capstone/Research	○	○	○	○

The following questions address content related to Learning Theory. Please indicate the importance of the following content areas.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
The Science of Teaching and Learning: Learning Theory	○	○	○	○
Student Learning Strategies	○	○	○	○

The following questions address content areas related to Teaching Responsibilities. Please indicate the importance of the following content areas.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Curricular Design	○	○	○	○
Course Design	○	○	○	○
Engaging Students	○	○	○	○
Active Learning Strategies	○	○	○	○
Technology Resources	○	○	○	○
Teaching Methodology	○	○	○	○

The following questions address content related to Student Assessment. Please indicate the importance of the following content areas.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Exam Writing Skills	○	○	○	○
Exam Metric Analysis	○	○	○	○
Development of Assignment	○	○	○	○
Rubric Development for Assignments	○	○	○	○
Development of Practicals	○	○	○	○
Rubric Development for Practicals	○	○	○	○

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Readiness for Full Time Clinical Education	○	○	○	○
Remediation	○	○	○	○

The following questions address content related to Academic Advising. Please indicate the importance of the following content areas.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Advising Responsibilities	○	○	○	○
Establishing Student/Faculty Relationships	○	○	○	○
Setting Boundaries	○	○	○	○
Facilitating Leadership	○	○	○	○
Coaching for Success	○	○	○	○
Student Crisis Management	○	○	○	○

The following questions address content related to Interprofessional Education. Please indicate the importance of the following content areas.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Interprofessional Education (IPEC competencies, debriefing skills, etc.)	○	○	○	○

The following questions gather general information about Faculty Development.

What resources does your department have/employ for faculty development. Please check all that apply.

- ☐ University Teaching and Learning Center
- ☐ Department Mentors
- ☐ AOTA New Faculty Development
- ☐ Workshop Other Formal CEU Courses
- ☐ Program Director Training
- ☐ Nothing Formal

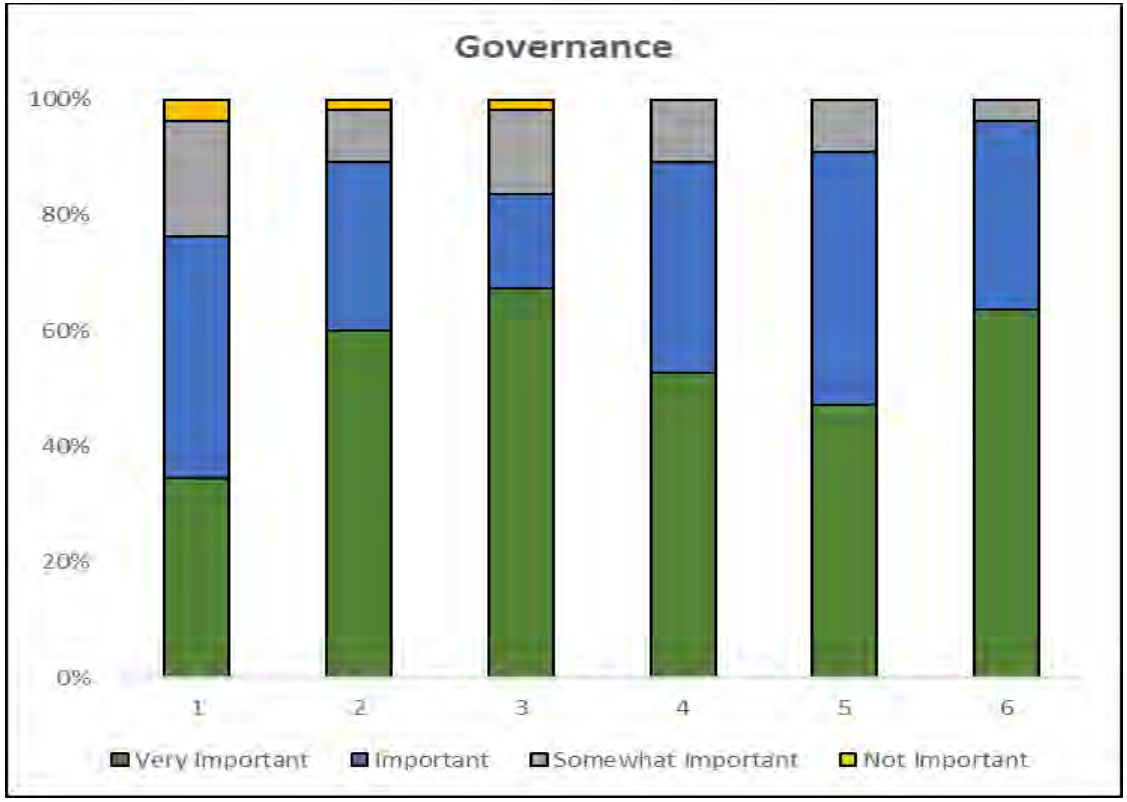
Would you support your early career faculty's involvement in a faculty development series which includes online asynchronous modules with discussion boards and twice monthly synchronous virtual discussion groups for content application? The program will occur over a period of 4-6 months.

- ○ Yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ No

Appendix 2

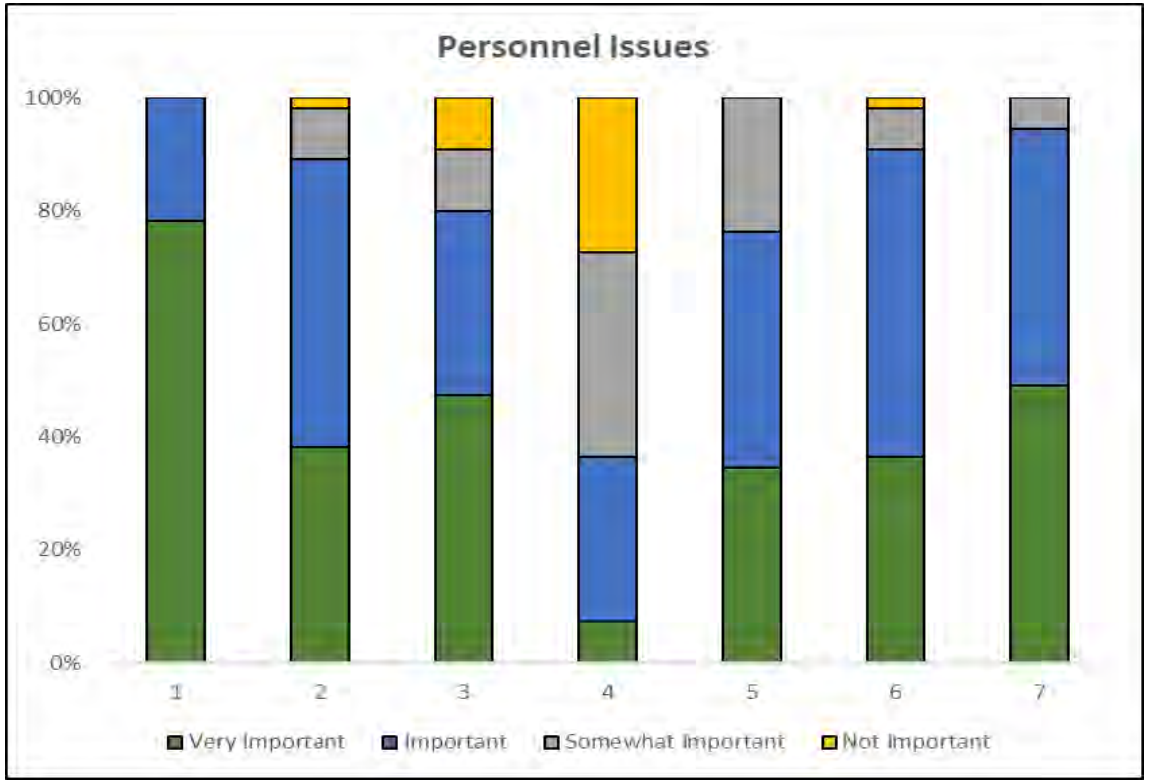
Graphs of Distribution of Survey Results

A. University Governance



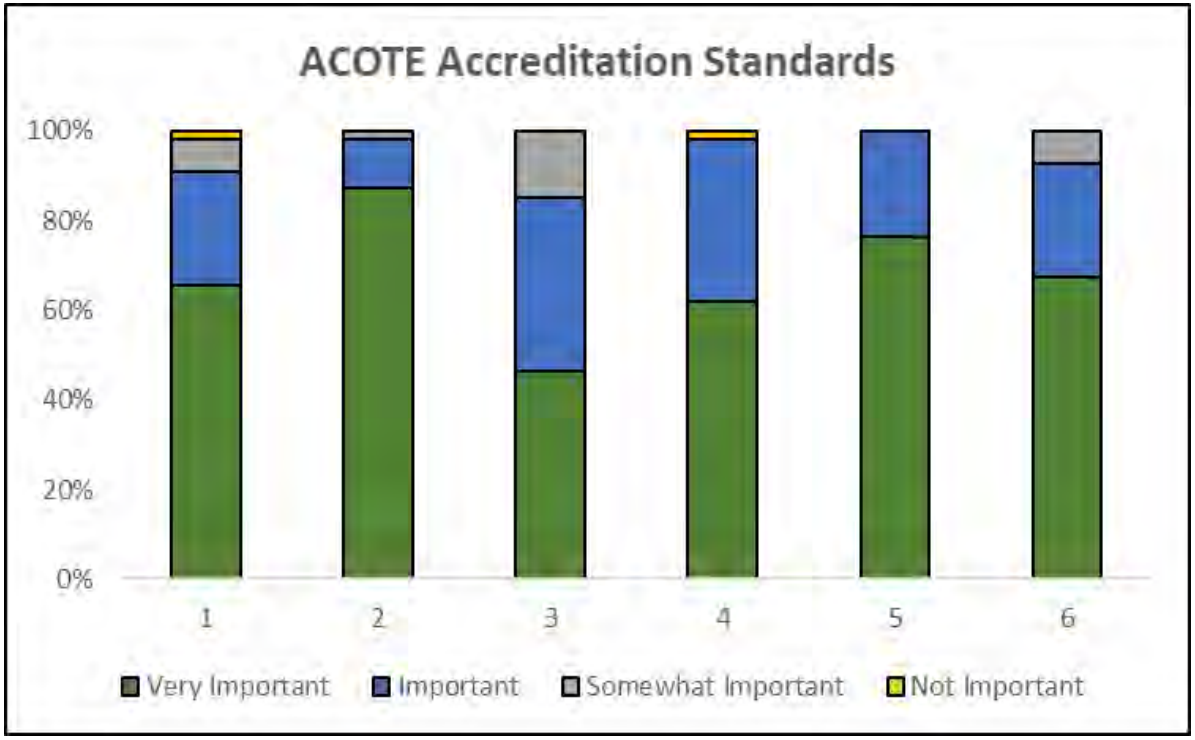
Distribution of responses for each item in the Governance section. 1- Classification and Structure of Academic Institutions, 2- Academic Legal and Ethical Issues, 3- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, Title IX), 4- Academic Freedom, 5- Service/Committee work, 6- Student Accommodation/ADA.

B. Personnel Issues



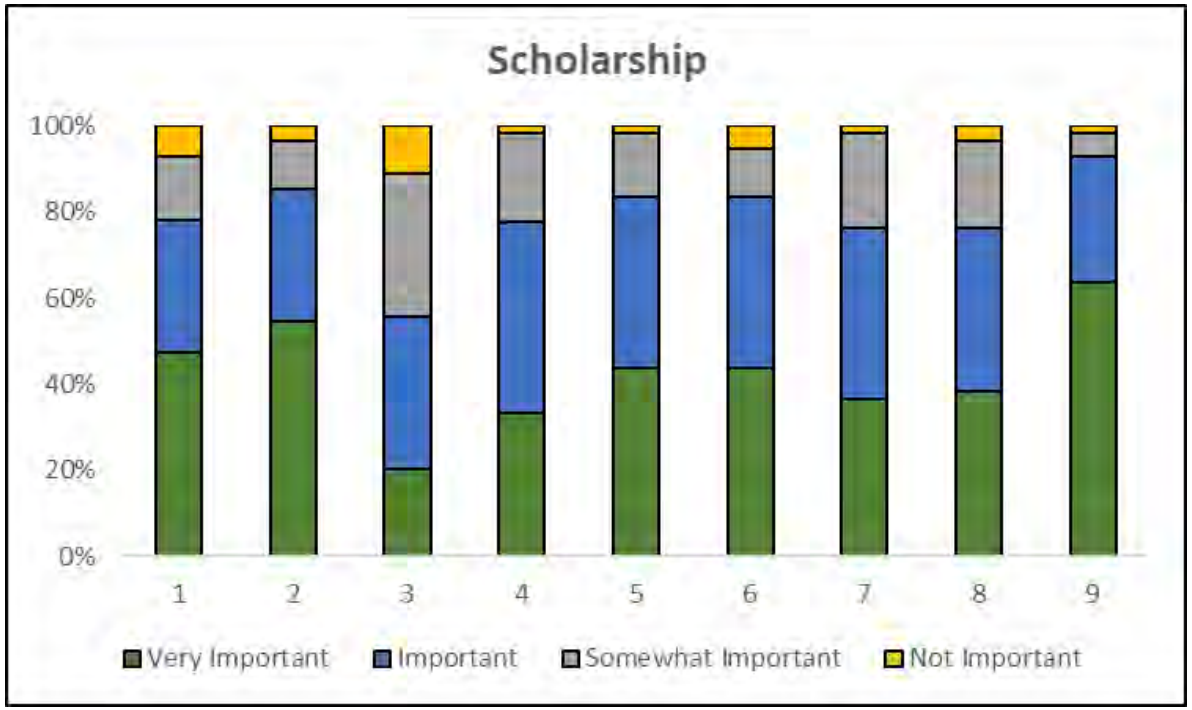
Distribution of responses for each item in the Personnel Issues section. 1- Workload, 2- Faculty Rank, 3- Promotion and Tenure, 4- Sabbatical Leave, 5- Development of Academic Curriculum Vitae and Scholarship Form, 6- Self- Evaluation, 7- Peer and Program Director Evaluation.

C. ACOTE Accreditation Standards



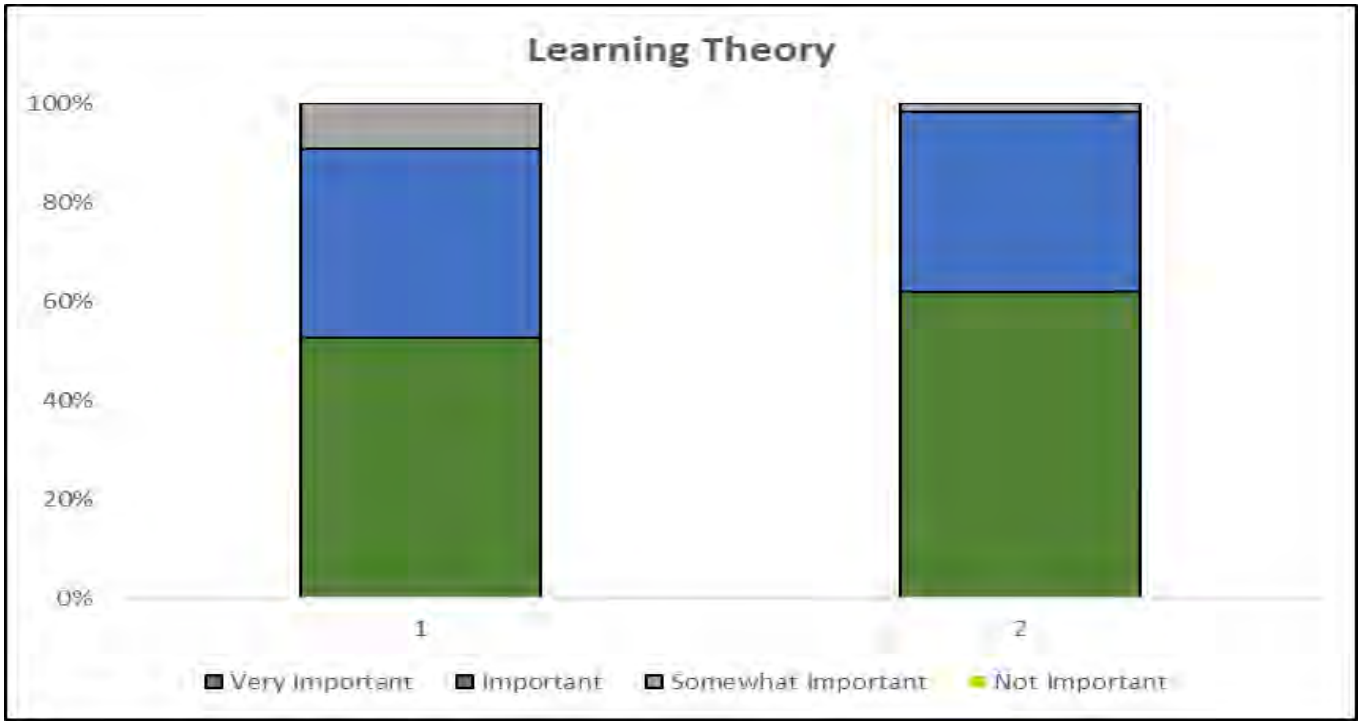
Distribution of responses for each item in the ACOTE section. 1- ACOTE's Role, 2- ACOTE Standards, 3- ACOTE's Definitions and Maintenance of Contemporary Practice, 4- Self-Study Process and Role as Faculty, 5-Program Assessment and Outcomes, 6-Strategic Planning.

D. Scholarship



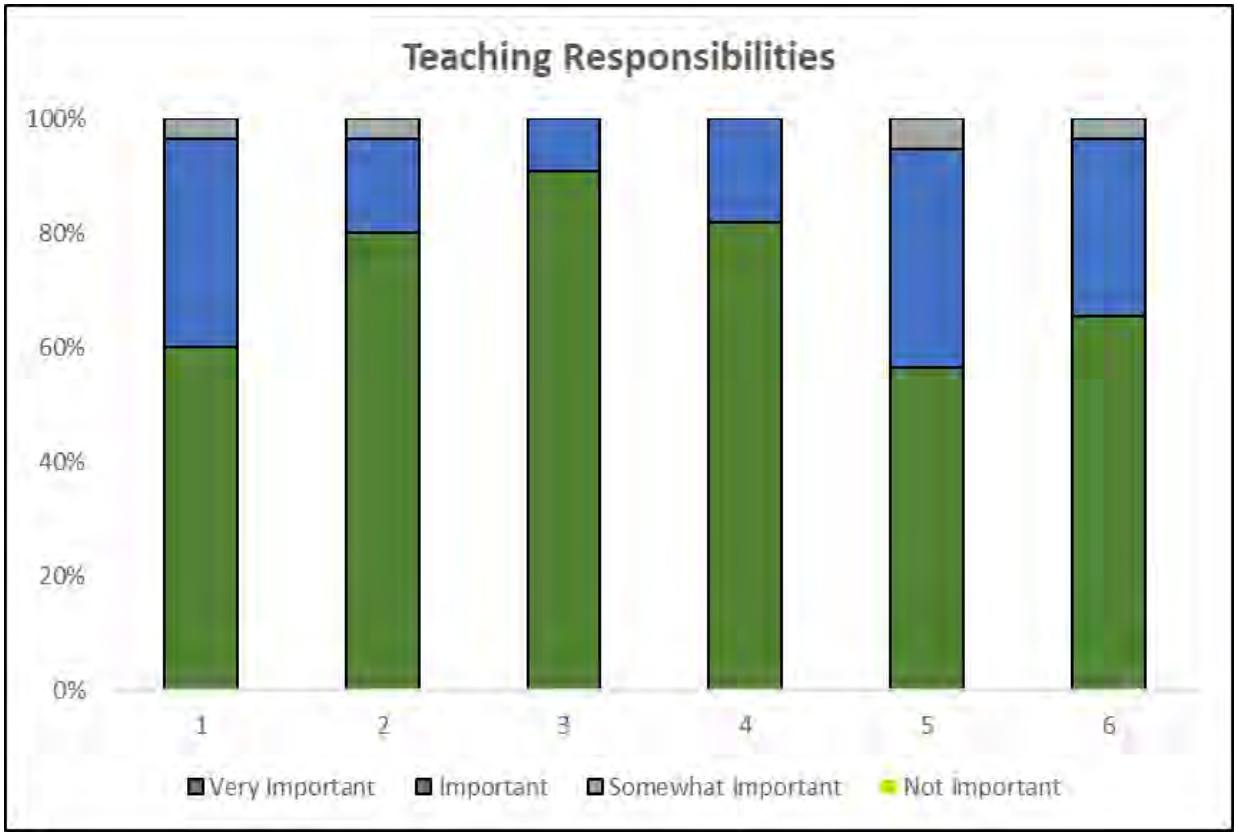
Distribution of responses for each item in the Scholarship section. 1- CITI Training, 2- Institutional Review Board (IRB), 3- Grant Writing, 4- Networking, 5- Critical Appraisal of the Literature, 6- Research Design/Types of Research, 7- Data Analysis, 8-Scientific Writing, 9-Mentoring Student's Capstone/Research.

E. Learning Theory



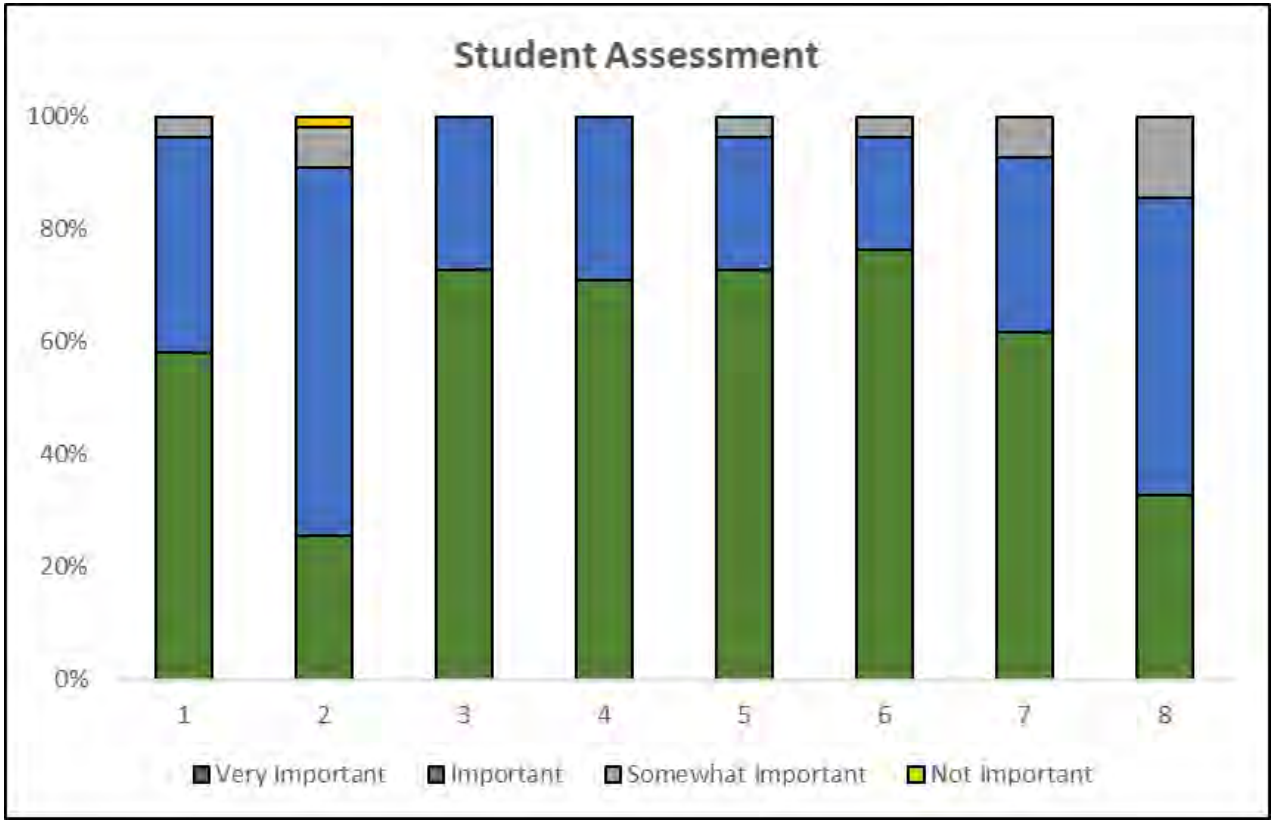
Distribution of responses for each item in the Learning Theory section. 1- The Science of Teaching and Learning: Learning Theory, 2- Student Learning Strategies.

F. Teaching Responsibilities



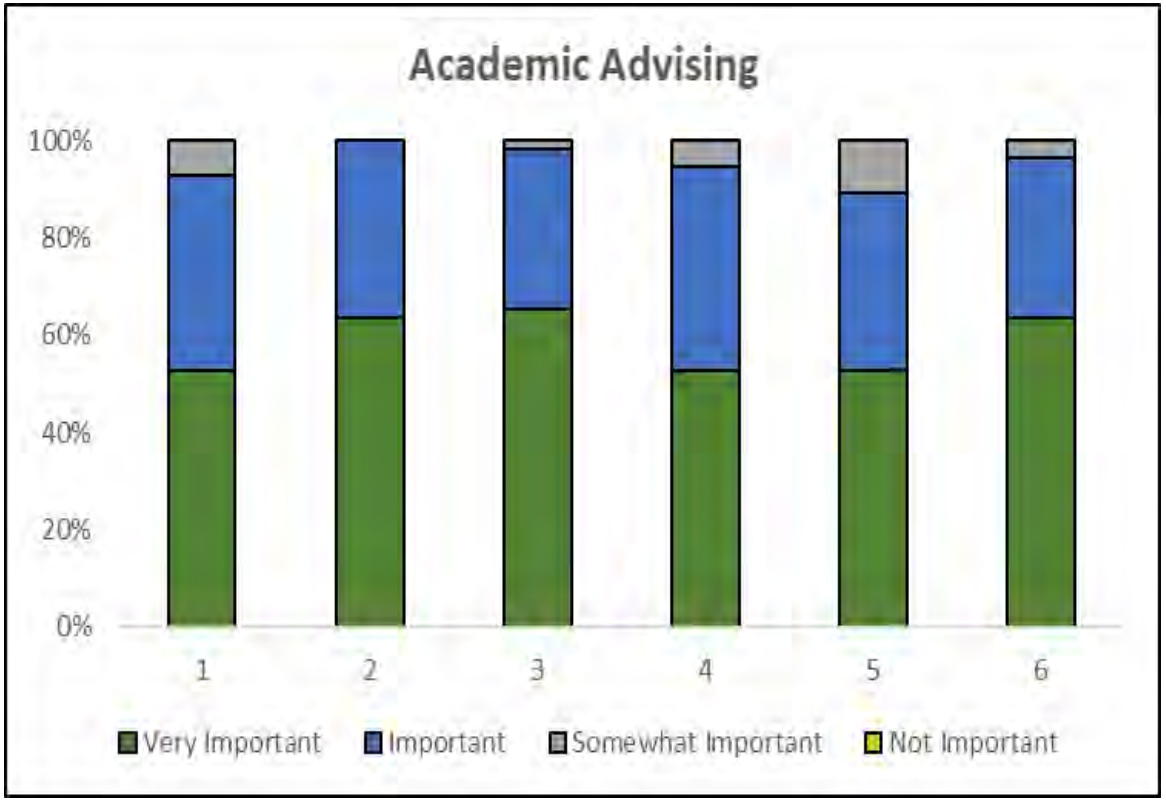
Distribution of responses for each item in the Teaching Responsibilities section. 1- Curricular Design, 2- Course Design, 3- Engaging Students, 4- Active Learning Strategies, 5- Technology Resources, 6- Teaching Methodology.

G. Student Assessment



Distribution of responses for each item in the Student Assessment section. 1- Exam Writing Skills, 2- Exam Metric Analysis, 3- Development of Assignments, 4- Rubric Development for Assignments, 5- Development of Practicals, 6- Rubric Development for Practicals, 7- Readiness for Full Time Clinical Education, 8- Remediation.

H. Academic Advising



Distribution of responses for each item in the Academic Advising section. 1- Advising Responsibilities, 2- Establishing Student/Faculty Relationships, 3- Setting Boundaries, 4- Facilitating Leadership, 5- Coaching for Success, 6- Student Crisis Management.