

2026 NCOTA Annual Conference

Onsite Program

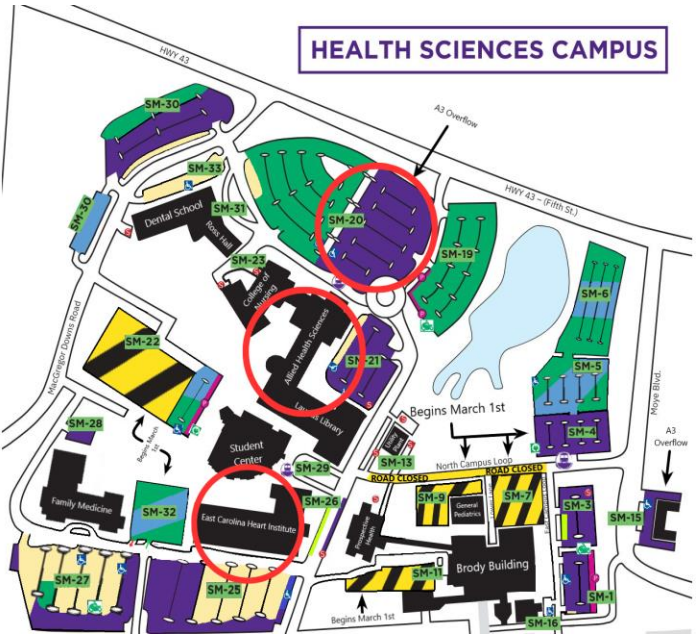
September 18-19, 2026

East Carolina University - Greenville, NC

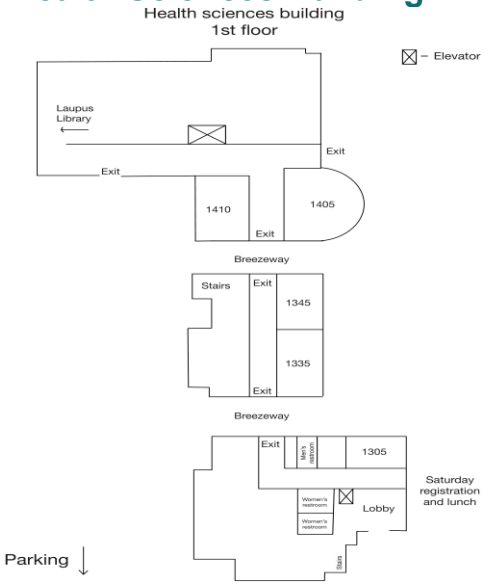
NCOTA

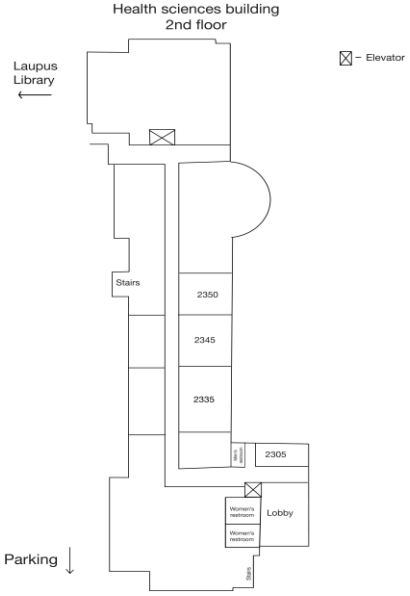
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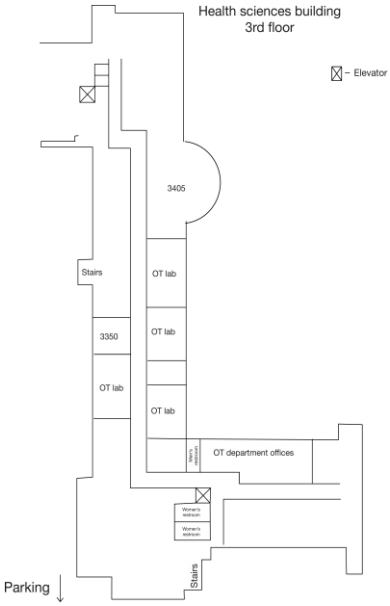
Campus & Building Maps



Allied Health Sciences Building




Health sciences building
2nd floor
Elevator
Laupus
Library
Stairs
2350
2345
2335
2305
Lobby
Parking


Health sciences building
3rd floor
Elevator
3405
Stairs
OT lab
3350
OT lab
OT lab
OT lab
OT department offices
Parking

Parking, Accessibility, Registration & Food

Parking and Accessibility

Parking is monitored. NCOTA Conference parking is assigned to lot SM-20 in the A3 Overflow. ADA accessible parking is available in the SM-20 lot.

A golf cart, wheelchairs, and volunteer guides are available upon request. If you have any accessibility requests or needs during the conference, please visit the conference registration table where volunteers will be available to assist.

Registration and Food

The registration table will be located in the Allied Health Sciences Building lobby.

Coffee and tea will be provided throughout the day on Saturday. Menu options will include accommodations for attendees who indicated dietary restrictions during registration.

Box lunches will be provided for attendees who registered prior to September 5. Box lunches will be available for pickup in the Allied Health Sciences building lobby at 11:45 am.

NCOTA Logo Design Competition

Congratulations to Tracey Russell, BS-OTA Class of 2028 from Methodist University, this year's NCOTA Logo Design Competition Winner!



Saturday, September 19 Schedule

7:00 – 7:30 am | Registration

Health Sciences Building Lobby

7:30 – 8:00 am | President's Breakfast

Room 1405

President's Breakfast and Meet the NCOTA Board

Charley Cross, MS, OTR/L — NCOTA President
Arameh Anvarizadeh, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA — AOTA Board President (2025–2028)
NCOTA Board Members



8:00 – 10:00 am | Concurrent Workshops (2.0 CEU)

#	Session	Speaker(s)	Room
A	Pediatric CIMT: Indications, Implementation, and Training	Rebecca Thompson, OTD, OTR/L; Brandi Marlin, OTS; Natalie Smith, OTS	1335
B	Role of the Occupational Therapy Practitioner in the NICU and Pediatric Acute Settings	Caroline Davenport, OTR/L; Melissa West, OTR/L	1345
C	Kinesiology Taping for Chronic Swelling and Scar Management	Shalene Orallo, MOT, OTR/L, CBIS, CLT-LANA, ALM	1410
D	From Idea to Impact: Mentorship Strategies for OTD Capstone Students	Nikki Hancock, OTD, OTR/L; Denise Donica, DHSc, OTR/L, BCP, FAOTA, FNAP	2305
E	A Journey: Film, Storytelling, and Occupational Therapy in Action	Anne Dickerson, PhD, OTR/L, SCDCM, FAOTA, FGSA; Rachel Taylor, OTD, OTR/L	2335
F	When the Struggle Isn't Visible: Upholding Humanity Through Early Recognition of Cognitive and Sensory Changes	Karen Johnson, MOT, OTR/L, CBIS, CSRS	2350



10:15 – 11:45 am | Concurrent Sessions (1.5 CEU)

#	Session	Speaker(s)	Room
A	Exploring Museum Engagement as Community Level Practice	Karen M. Edwards, MS, Ed, MS, OTR/L; Molly Hull	1335
B	The Persistent Drive for Autonomy: Understanding PDA from the Inside Out	Mary Bird, OTR/L	1345
C	Helping Clients Navigate the Healthcare System	Kathryn Sorensen, OTD, OTR/L, ADAC	1410
D	Integrating Lived Experience into OT Education: Using Live Client Encounters to Teach Humanity in Practice	Kayleigh Fessenden, OTD, OTR/L; Jennifer Smith, MS, OTR/L	2305
E	Classroom Capstones: The Secret Ingredient!	Kaitlyn Wright, OTD; Amy Mahle, EdD, COTA/L, ROH	2330
F	Centering Occupation to Cultivate Justice-Focused OT Practitioners	Raheleh Ghasseminia PhD MS OT/L; Barb Hooper PhD, OTR, FAOTA; MaryBeth Gallagher PhD, OTR/L, BCMH	2335
G	Beyond Biomechanical: Mindfulness as a Clinical Tool in Outpatient Rehabilitation	Elizabeth Williams, OTD, OTR/L	2350
H	Using Student Program Design Assignments to Develop Innovative OT Health Promotion Programs for Older Adults	Maryann Brennan, OTD, MA, OTR/L, CSP; Grace Russ, MSOT-S	3405
I	Integrating high-fidelity simulation into OT/PT curricula through cross-cultural collaboration	Sanchala Sen, OTD, MS, OTR/L, BCPR, FAOTA; Tina Webb, PP-OTD, MS, OTR/L, CSRS, CGCP; Chinno Ingram, DrOT, MS, OTR/L, PTA, CEAS	3350

11:45 am – 12:00 pm | Pick Up Lunch

Allied Health Sciences Building Lobby

12:00 – 1:00 pm | Concurrent SIS Lunch & Learns (1.0 CEU)

#	Session	Speaker(s)	Room
A	Compensation for School-Based Occupational Therapists: Understanding the Complexities, Promoting Transparency, and Defining Next Steps	Karen Merchant MOT, OT/L; Melissa LeViner OTR/L	1335
B	Going Beyond ADLs: Intervention Sharing for Adult Rehab	Isabel Carter, MSOT, OTR/L; Kayla Tabet, OTD, OTR/L, BCPR; Tina A. Webb, PP-OTD, MS, OTR/L, CSRS, CGCP; Jeffery T. Lucas, PhD, OTR/L, CDP, CKTP, CAPS	1345
C	Off-the-Shelf Independence: Commercially Available Assistive Technology	Heather B. Smith, MS, OTR/L, ATP; Lindsay Boyce, OTR/L	2330
D	Essential Suicide Prevention Skills for Occupational Therapy Across Practice Settings	Carli DiMeo, OTD, OTR/L, BCP; Allen Keener, PhD, OTD, OTR/L, ATP, FAOTA	2335
E	Beyond Membership: How State Occupational Therapy Associations Can Shape Your Career?	Christine McConnell, DC, OTR/L	2350
F	From Student to Leader: Why State OT Associations Matter	Maryann Brennan, OTD, MA, OTR/L, CSP; Hannah Guschel, OTD, OTR/L	2305

1:15 – 2:15 pm | Business Meeting and Vote on Bylaws (1.0 CEU)

Room 1410

Business Meeting and Vote on Bylaws

2:30 – 4:00 pm | Concurrent Sessions (1.5 CEU)

#	Session	Speaker(s)	Room
A	Acute Care in Action: Strengthening Clinical Reasoning Through Simulation	Megan Hardee, MAEd, COTA/L, CBIS; Caroline Andrews, OTD, MS, OTR/L	1335
B	Understanding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)	Alison Parker, PhD; Kathy Hotelling, PhD	1345
C	Harnessing Equine Movement: Bridging Real and Simulated Interventions for Clinicians	Katie Gowan, OTS; Brooke Rochester, OTS; Kalin Creech, OTS; Tykashi McNeal, OTS; Alison Schilf, OTS; Heather Panczykowski, DHSc, OTR/L, FAOTA	1410
D	Challenging Expectations: Assistive Technology Services in the School Systems	Jacob S. Anderson, OTR/L, ATP	2305
E	Integrating Lifestyle Medicine in Occupational Therapy Practice	Jennifer C. Smith, OTD, MBA, OTR/L	2330
F	Enhancing Patient Care Through Quality Assurance and Data Collection in a Student-Run Free Clinic	Chinno D. Ingram, DrOT, MS, OTR/L, PTA, CEAS; Jeffery Lucas, PhD, OTR/L, CDP, CKTP, CAPS	2335
G	NBCOT® National Certification Exam: Information You Need to Know	Taz (Tae-Sun) Kang, MSOT, OTR/L, NBCOT Ambassador for North Carolina	2350
H	Application of Therapist Readiness Flowchart as a Checklist to Decrease Practitioner Injury	Sarah Wright, OTD, MOT, OTR/L; Hilary Till, OTR/L	3405
I	Dementia - Why Should OTPs Take Away the Keys?	Helen Houston, MS, OTR/L; Courtney Stallings, OTR/L	3350

4:15 – 5:15 pm | Closing Plenary: Ethics (1.0 CEU)

Room 1410 (Overflow: 1335, 1345, 2305)

OT Ethics and Implicit Bias

Amber L. Ward, MS, OTR/L, BCPR, ATP/SMS, FAOTA


Transitioning from a full-time clinician to academia, I realized that gaining advanced knowledge and skills would enhance my effectiveness as an educator.
Jesse Ausec, OTD, OTR/L, SIPT
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Special Guest and Friday's Keynote



Arameh Anvarizadeh, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA

Dr. Arameh Anvarizadeh, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA is a Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy and former Director of Admissions at the USC Mrs. T.H. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. As the architect of USC Chan's holistic admissions process, Dr. Anvarizadeh led transformative efforts that resulted in the most diverse cohorts in the Division's history all while preserving rigorous and effective admissions standards. Her leadership has also been pivotal in strengthening recruitment and retention strategies, creating pathway programs, and promoting inclusive pedagogy.

A Founding Member and former Chair of the Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD), Dr. Anvarizadeh has been a driving force in advancing justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, and anti-oppression within the occupational therapy profession. She is the visionary behind many of COTAD's cornerstone initiatives, including COTAD Chapters, the COTAD Toolkit, the Ignite Series, and the Fieldwork Task Force.

Dr. Anvarizadeh made history as the youngest and the first Black and Iranian woman to serve as Vice President of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and to be inducted into the prestigious Roster of Fellows (FAOTA). She made history again with her landslide election as AOTA President, a role she officially assumed in July 2025.

In addition to her current role as AOTA President, Dr. Anvarizadeh has held numerous national leadership positions, including Chair of the Credential Review and Accountability Committee (CRAC), member of the Representative Assembly Leadership Committee (RALC), member of the Governance Task Force, and liaison between the Governance and DEI Task Forces. She also served on the AOTA Special Task Force on Entry-Level Education and was a key contributor to the national dialogue on entry-level degree requirements. Dr. Anvarizadeh is a proud alumna of the 2020 Executive Leadership Program for Multicultural Women.

In her home state of California, she has been recognized with the Janice Matsutsuyu Outstanding Service Award and the Vision Award from the Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC). She previously served as OTAC's Communications Chair for seven years and contributed to various committees, including Advocacy and Government Affairs and Conference Planning.

An accomplished author and dynamic speaker, Dr. Anvarizadeh has presented at numerous state, national, and international conferences, delivering keynotes, lectures, and commencement addresses. She has

authored multiple peer-reviewed articles and book chapters and is a contributing editor to the recently published book Occupational Identity.

Most recently, Dr. Anvarizadeh is embracing her most meaningful role yet: motherhood. She is intentional about honoring this life shift, leaning into her community, and nurturing balance. Deeply passionate about building sustainable, healthy, and inclusive communities, she continues to champion equity, empowerment, and advocacy. Through her work and heart-centered leadership, she inspires others to discover, cultivate, and amplify their fullest potential.



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