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## An Exploration of the Occupational Needs of College Students

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**An Exploration of the Occupational Needs of College Students  
at Dominican University of California**

By

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A culminating capstone project submitted to the faculty of Dominican University  
of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Occupational Therapy

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyzes the barriers and supports for DUC students in meeting their occupational needs and what services might be beneficial to them. To be able to answer this question, we conducted a survey using convenience sampling with twenty-seven Dominican undergraduate students, interviewed staff, and conducted a focus group with the students who participated in the survey. Our results indicated four main themes which include: occupational needs, barriers to meeting occupational needs, supports to meeting occupational needs, and services recommended. For the implications for occupational therapy, we found that OTs are beneficial in several aspects of students' lives and can be implemented on and around the campus.

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## **Introduction**

Occupational therapists (OTs) are known to provide support to individuals when it comes to meeting their occupational needs and overcoming barriers to the meaningful activities they incorporate into their daily lives. College students are a population of individuals who often experience barriers to meeting their occupational needs, leading to challenges in mental and physical health. Having occupational therapists on campus could be beneficial for students to help them improve engagement in occupations. OTs can guide students in managing their skills and occupations needed to be successful students, which ultimately leads to a greater sense of belonging and achievement for students in all aspects of their lives. This project aims to evaluate and determine the supports and barriers to the occupational needs of college students and explore how OT might help in meeting these needs.

## **Background**

Occupations are an essential component of occupational therapy. The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework defines occupations as “everyday activities that people do as individuals, in families, and with communities to occupy time and bring meaning and purpose to life. Occupations include things people need to, want to, and are expected to do” (AOTA, 2020, p.30). As defined by the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, activities of daily living (ADLs) include bathing/showering, toileting/toilet hygiene, dressing, eating/swallowing, feeding, functional mobility, personal hygiene/grooming, and sexual activity. Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) include care of others, care of pets and animals, child-rearing, communication management, driving and community mobility, financial management, home establishment and management, meal preparation and cleanup, religious and spiritual expression, safety and emergency maintenance, and shopping (AOTA, p.30-31, 2020).

## **Literature Review**

### **OT with Students**

Occupational therapy can be a part of supported education services as they are able to help students successfully manage their occupations and skills that support their roles as students. Supported education has been effective in helping individuals with goals in work and education. Supported education can lead to improvements in self-esteem and quality of life as it is “the provision of individualized, practical support and instructions to assist people with psychiatric disabilities to achieve their educational goals” (Soydan, 2004, p. 227). Supported education also provides programs and supports to help people access and complete postsecondary education (Fossey et. al, 2014). Keptner and McCarthy (2020) conducted a scoping review that mapped out literature of occupational therapists working with students in postsecondary settings to inform future research and practice. Some of the occupations and skills that were addressed and were focused on were stress management, communication skills, social participation, work, education, IADLs, sleep and rest, and leisure. Keptner and McCarthy (2020) state that the primary goal of occupational therapy with postsecondary students is to help them achieve optimal occupational performance.

### **Disability and Diagnosis**

In addressing occupational needs in students, it is important to understand the disabilities and diagnoses that may affect students’ daily lives and their occupational needs. The college environment is significantly different from the high school environment and presents challenges to students with DSM-5 diagnoses (Schindler, 2019). The differences between high school and college environments may present degrees of difficulty in time management, organization,

academic skills, social skills, and underlying cognitive skills. Understanding disabilities and diagnoses can help identify target populations such as students with ASD, ADHD, depressive disorder, and anxiety disorder that could potentially benefit from OT on campus.

### **Learning Disabilities**

There is a significant population of students with learning disabilities and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in universities, but they experience challenges to meeting occupational expectations associated with being in college (Kreider et al., 2021). Kreider et al. (2021) investigated the ways graduate-student mentors provided problem-solving support for their undergraduate mentees with learning disabilities and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. The mentors worked with their mentees to guide and co-create strategies to address their academic, social, and daily life challenges. From the study, it can be concluded that mentorship is important for supporting the social functioning of young people as they transition to new adult roles and contexts. They serve as a type of support for young people within college environments which shows how having mentorship publicly available to students can be impactful.

### **Mental Health**

Mental health is an important aspect of one's occupational needs. An occupational therapist's main concern is the participation of individuals in meaningful and valued activities. The Jed Foundation conducted a survey about college student mental health in 2020 with nearly 200 college and graduate students asking about their emotional readiness for the fall 2020 semester given the circumstances of COVID-19. They found that 63% of students said their emotional health is worse than before the pandemic, and 56% are concerned with their ability to

care for their mental health (Jed Foundation, 2020). The survey concludes that students need more support from their school administration and that mental health should be a top priority for schools. Occupational therapy has been an emerging support service for students experiencing mental health concerns on campus (Keptner & McCarthy, 2020). Mental health has been a considerable concern in college campuses prior to COVID-19 and prior to this, students have been worrying about an uncertain future and feeling isolated from their routines and school (Keptner & McCarthy, 2020).

OTs in universities showed support to students which in turn, students had positive GPA outcomes for students diagnosed with DSM-5 diagnoses that participated in the OT-based SED program, which is a structured, manualized, skill development program (Schindler, 2019). The students in this program were able to receive positive outcomes in retention, graduation, and GPA as they were able to positively respond to the mentoring and structure of the program and developed system to support successful completion of exams and assignments (Howard et al., 2016; Schindler et al., 2015; Trainor et al., 2016).

### **Need for Education of OT Role**

There are limited services and use of OT services in college. Eismann et al. (2017) conducted a study where occupational therapists (OT) can be in colleges and found ways that would best support the students' needs. The study in the article demonstrates that many students do not realize that there are OT services during college and how they can enhance their life with the help of an OT. In their study, they identified different characteristics of people achieving occupational therapy services during the transition to adulthood and the findings suggested that "there are opportunities for occupational therapy practitioners to increase their role in supporting

the transition to adulthood” (Eismann et. al., 2017, p.8). A lot of people don’t understand the role of OTs and how they can help with our daily lives. There needs to be a continued education for the community and future clients about the role of OTs so they know that they are another resource they can reach out to and be educated on the services OTs offer.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to 1) explore the occupational needs of college students and 2) assess what services might be beneficial for the population. The project will address the questions: What are the barriers and supports for DUC students in meeting their occupational needs and what services might be beneficial to them?



## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Person-Environment-Occupation Model**

The Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) Model highlights occupational performance that is formed by the interaction between person, environment, and occupation (Brown et. al, 2019). This model can apply to all disabilities and all populations whether it be children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly. The person domain contains role, self-concept, cultural background, personality, health, cognition, physical performance, and sensory capabilities. The environmental domain is related to physical, cultural, institutional, social, and socio-economic environments. Lastly, the occupation refers to the groups of tasks that the person engages in to meet their self-maintenance, expression and fulfillment.

The PEO model is a concept that is guiding what we think about occupational balance because each domain is dependent and affected by each other and the factors included in each. It takes the perspective from across the lifespan and is constantly changing. This model can be also seen as an assessment tool to understand and analyze problematic areas that affect clients' occupational performance or as an intervention tool to help improve clients' occupational performance by enhancing the balance of the three domains (Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) Model, n.d.).

### **Ethical and Legal Considerations**

We held a discussion on zoom with faculty and students that held leadership positions on campus to complete our needs assessment. We asked for their permission to record and let them know that the only people that had access to the recording were our group and that their names would remain confidential. Our group utilized a google form as our survey, which was sent out

through emails to collect data from undergraduate students attending Dominican University of California. Before the participants started the survey, we informed them that their names would remain anonymous, and any discussion we had would be used as a way to look at the needs of the student population. In addition to conducting interviews and sending out a google form, we also held a focus group with participants from the survey. Before starting the focus group we asked the participants for permission to record and acknowledged that the recording would be used for transcribing purposes and that their names would once again remain confidential to our capstone group. All participants were made aware that the video recordings and transcriptions would be deleted after we used the data and information to complete our program.

## **Methodology**

### **Design**

#### ***Needs Assessment***

Data associated with the *Dominican Experience Survey: Spring 2021* was collected in the spring semester of 2021 with the administration window opening in April and closing in May. Of the 1499 students invited to take the survey, 255 participated (response rate of 17% with 15% being undergraduate and 23% being graduate students). From the survey, it was found that nearly all students planned to work with academic advisors (48% with an integrative coach and 58% with a peer mentor). Students also reported the highest levels of agreement with the statements about feeling supported to succeed and help with creating goals for their academic success. Limitations of this survey are that there are potential concerns related to generalizability due to a relatively low response rate (particularly among undergraduate students).

#### **Profiling The Community**

The community we will be focusing on for this project is the community at Dominican University of California (DUC). The data gathered from Fall 2021, indicates that the community at DUC is very diverse being populated by; 35.2% White, 21% Asian, 20.4% Hispanic/Latino, 4% Black or African American, 4.7% more than two races, 0.8% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, 3.3% Nonresident Alien, and the remaining 10.1% Race and ethnicity is not known. At DUC, there are currently 1,855 students enrolled where 20.9% are First-Generation college students and 73% are female where the majority of the students (65%) are within the age group of 18-24. The most common enrollment is in the School of Health and Natural Sciences (56.1%) (University Facts, 2021).

DUC is located in a wealthy suburb outside of San Francisco. Located in the town of San Rafael within Marin County. DUC is tucked away in a residential neighborhood near San Pedro mountain preserve and China Camp state park while also being near the San Rafael and San Francisco bay which gives the campus all of its beauty and calming nature. Being tucked away in a residential area poses barriers to grocery shopping, getting to doctor appointments, and going out if an individual does not have a vehicle. Within a mile from DUC are grocery stores and restaurants for students to shop and dine. DUC has a gym, which is accessible to not only Dominican students but also the community of San Rafael by having a membership if not a student. DUC has a health center located on campus for students to access counseling services and receive medical attention when ill. DUC also has an academic center; offering free academic advising, tutoring, and integrative coaching to all students in need.

Since DUC is in a wealthy county, finding affordable and accessible housing can be difficult for students. DUC offers housing and residential life in the form of townhomes and dorms. There is also a cafeteria and coffee shop for snacks on campus for students, guests and professors to dine at. However, the cafeteria and coffee shop are only open for limited hours. Chilly's coffee shop is open 7:45 am-8 pm every weekday and closed on the weekends which makes it difficult for students who live on campus to get snacks on the weekends. Caleruega cafe is open only during set hours each day including: Breakfast 7:30am-9:30am, Lunch 11:30am-1:30pm and Dinner 4:30pm-7pm. Having these limited, set times for each meal, it makes it hard for students to get food when they are free from class and work. Students may not be able to eat dinner because they are in class during the cafe hours, and will ultimately need to find another way to eat, posing a barrier to their physical health.

**Profiling the services**

Dominican University of California offers many services for its students which include: student health, university counseling services, academic advising, integrative coaching, and housing and residence life. The purpose of the student health center includes physical evaluation and treatment, health education and preventative services, and emotional and psychological support and counseling (University Facts, 2021). The group of individuals they serve is all registered Dominican students. This population can receive these services regardless of their medical insurance plan as long as they are registered to the school. The services they offer include evaluation and treatment of acute illness and minor injuries, health education and evaluation of health concerns, pregnancy testing, birth control, sexual, sexually transmitted infections, and reproductive counseling and services, nutrition counseling, smoking and vaping cessation counseling, stress management counseling, tuberculin skin testing, and vaccinations. The unmet needs for this population include those who are not able to afford and receive these services without insurance or help from outside services.

The purpose of the university counseling services is to provide a supportive environment where students can explore, change and grow at their own practice (University Facts, 2021). The group of individuals that they serve are all registered Dominican students. This population can receive this service if they need help or have concerns about how to deal with their day-to-day world. The program they offer can help with issues such as relationships, school, test anxiety, study problems, suicidal thoughts, family conflict, alcohol and drug use, stress, and general feelings of being “stuck”. An unmet need for this population includes those who need support in their daily life and activities.

The purpose of academic advising is to encourage students to develop their unique academic paths. Academic advising helps new and transfer students and continuing students at Dominican University. The students who are part of the academic advising program can receive help with selecting courses, learning how to enroll in classes, learning more about the university and what they have to offer, and discussing possible changes to their degree plan such as adding/changing minors and majors, learning about electives, co-curricular opportunities, and possible internships, and ensuring that you are on the right path to graduate on time and have met all requirements that you need. The unmet need of the population includes students who are confused about what their next steps should be or if they need guidance for their plan.

The purpose of integrative coaching is to help support students in being successful in their personal and academic goals and to help them get connected with their peers and career mentors. These coaches consist of faculty and staff who specialize in supporting students who teach courses that help them prepare for their future. Integrative coaches will meet regularly during the school year with students to check in on how things are going in their classrooms and lives. They will develop an education and career plan and help them work on their digital portfolio. Other classes included in the integrative curriculum will prepare students for a career, relationships, and healthy living.

The purpose of housing and residence life allows students at Dominican to create friends and a community on campus. This especially allows freshmen to integrate into the community by joining available clubs and events around campus as well as easier access to meet new people and make new friends by living in close proximity with one another. In the living spaces provided by the university, residents can watch movies, participate in student club activities,

relax, study, or play sports. Having all these resources available to students can allow students to destress from a busy lifestyle that being a college student entails and can be a great way to improve mental health as it provides a distraction from school and life.

Through the analysis of data from a survey previously conducted on the DUC campus in spring 2021 by Leah Ozeroff, called the *Dominican Experience Survey*, we discovered “Nearly all students reported they had or planned to work with Academic Advisors. About half of undergraduates said they had or planned to work with an Integrative Coach (48%) or Peer Mentor (58%).” This information stands out to us because it shows the need for guidance and coaching/mentoring of college students on the DUC campus. Through the data we also concluded the agreement was the least amount among both undergraduate and graduate students when asked if their experience at Dominican contributed to cultivating a sense of well-being (this includes mental, physical and spiritual health), indicating the possible need for increasing support on DUC campus in this area.

### **Methods**

We sent out a survey (see Appendix A) to DUC students with questions focusing on their perception of support and barriers to their occupational needs. After analyzing the initial survey, we located staff and students in leadership positions and student services related to occupational needs and held interviews with them to discuss and identify the group(s) of students who have the most barriers to their occupational needs (see Appendix B). After identifying these individuals we held a focus group (see Appendix C) with the students to discuss what supports/resources they think would be helpful to them in meeting their occupational needs, one of which could possibly be Occupational Therapy.

**Participants**

The participants for our project were students, faculty and staff from Dominican University of California. The students consisted of undergraduate students from all majors and programs currently enrolled at DUC. The faculty and staff participants included a resident advisor, the associate director of the library, the scholarly communications librarian, the coordinator of tutoring services, two recreational sports staff, and two integrative coaches that are also involved with the Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS).

**Data Collection**

To collect our data we utilized a convenience sampling technique by posting on social media and reaching out to students through email to take our survey (see Appendix A). To further collect data through the use of a snowball sampling technique, the end of our survey asked that the student pass down our information to their peers so that more people would take our survey. We then sent an email to multiple departments of services offered at DUC that we wanted to interview. We held interviews with different department services offered on campus to gain a better understanding of Dominican students' needs since they come to these services for support. We facilitated conversations with the people who run these services in order to discover what they believe students' barriers are. We also wanted to know what students come to these services for, what their concerns are, and what areas in their lives students are needing help with specifically. The service providers we held interviews with were the recreational sports staff, student health center, counseling services, academic advising, integrative coaching, and housing/residence life. Lastly, we sent an email to the participants from our survey to participate in our focus group. We conducted a focus group with the participants that volunteered to gain a



better insight into student needs at DUC.

### **Surveys**

For the survey we sent out to students using convenience and snowball sampling techniques, 27 undergraduate students completed the survey. Looking over the results of the students who have taken the survey, we were able to find common themes within the responses (see Appendix A). Common occupations that students say they need or want to do in their life are cooking/baking (77.8%), listening to music (81.5%), and spending time with family (88.9%). Students feel as if school is a common inhibitor to being able to engage in meaningful occupations due to the rigorous course load and time needed to study. In regards to social life on campus, students feel that it is easier to find and make friends in this college environment. Living on campus creates access to resources and opportunities unique to the college environment. For example, surveyed participants state that living on campus makes it “easy to get to the gym” and have “access to on-campus resources”. Students also attest that living on campus allows them to step out of their comfort zone because it gives them the opportunities to partake in activities they normally wouldn’t. Participants reported self-care, mental health, and rest/sleep were common areas that students experience difficulty balancing while being a college student. Amongst participants, 66.7% of the students report that “sometimes” they feel like they get all of their daily activities done to a standard that is satisfactory for them. When analyzing occupational balance, students self-reported that they prioritize school/studying and push off their physical health, self-care, and social life. Out of the 27 students who answered our survey, 48.1% reported that they could be better at time management skills. Additionally, many students reported that they would like DUC to give more days off and communicate the student resources more. Sixty

three percent of students said they utilize the campus resources already, and reported tutoring and counseling help them a lot.

### **Interviews**

Our team conducted individual interviews with the DUC faculty and staff. Through these interviews, we were able to gain greater insight into how student needs were viewed through the point of view of faculty and staff from the times they have interacted and worked with DUC students (see Appendix B).

### **Focus group**

Our team conducted a focus group with four of the student participants from our survey in order to facilitate a conversation about the supports and barriers the students have in meeting their occupational needs (see Appendix C). We created a google slide presentation which was used during the focus group to define important terms and to help with the structure and organization of the different points we discussed. We also utilized jam boards to better understand what services are needed on campus and how DUC can best support student needs.

## **Findings**

After coding our surveys, interviews, and focus groups with the Dedoose software (version 9.0.54), we established four main themes which include: occupational needs, barriers to meeting occupational needs, supports to meeting occupational needs, and services recommended. These themes provided insight into the barriers and supports for DUC students in meeting their occupational needs and what services may be beneficial to them.

### **Occupational Needs**

Occupational needs are defined as “everyone has occupational needs to: (1) choose daily occupations, (2) participate in occupations, (3) have a balance of various occupations in his or her life (eg, self-care, productivity, leisure), and (4) engage in personally meaningful occupations” (Helen & Vivian, 2013, p. 1246). Occupational needs are very important to any individual as it provides a basis for how they can engage in all other activities.

### **Occupational Balance**

A common thread that was found between our survey and focus group participants was that they wanted to be able to better balance occupational needs. A focus group participant had said “I think balance could look like you having enough time to go to your classes in one day, as well as finish any school work that you have been assigned that day and having time for self-care”. This shows the importance of student education and how trying to manage it into one’s time can become a challenge. In regard to occupational balance, a survey participant had said that they “usually prioritize school which forces me to push off self-care, leisure activities, social activities, and sleep. It also somewhat affects what I eat as I like to cook but sometimes don’t have the time to cook or am too tired to cook so I resort to eating a lot of frozen food. I also push

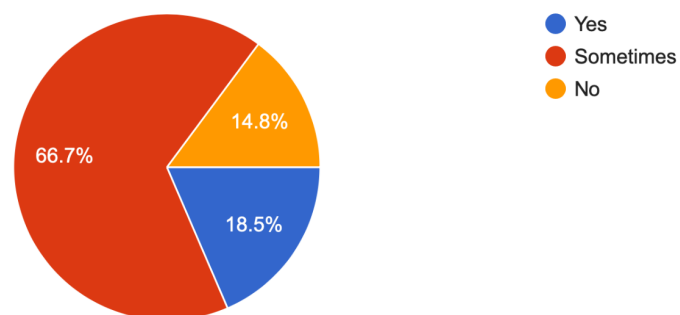
off doing work sometimes to catch up on sleep”. Although there is a desire to engage in things like self-care, sleep, leisure or social time, and maintaining a healthy diet, students feel a pressure to always prioritize school and their studies over their other needs. A focus group participant had also said “I think it definitely does affect not only your mental, but your physical health, like being unable to go to the gym, not really taking care of yourself in the way that you should be”. When students feel like they aren’t able to engage in all of their needs in a balanced manner it takes a negative toll on their overall mental and physical health.

Through our research, we found that students at DUC are not always meeting all their occupational needs (see Figure 1), and this can have negative effects on their physical health, mental health, as well as affect their performance in other aspects of their lives. After identifying the occupational needs of students at Dominican it was found that students are also having trouble with finding occupational balance and figuring out how to juggle important aspects in their life such as sleep, social life, work, and education.

*Figure 1 Occupations and Activities of Daily living*

Do you feel like you get all of your occupations or daily activities (including personal, school/work and leisure) done to a standard that is ok for you?

27 responses



**Barriers to meeting occupational needs**

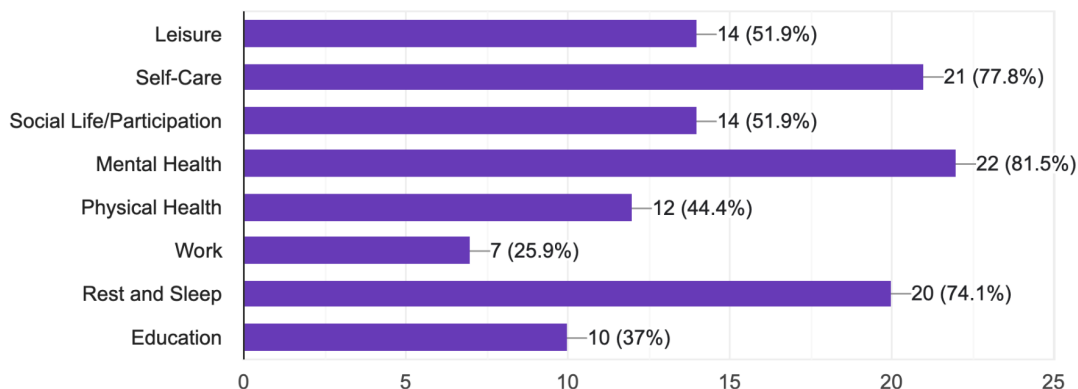
The results of our needs assessment indicated the barriers that inhibit students from DUC from meeting their occupational needs. One major barrier that students experience that limits their ability to meet their occupational needs is the limited knowledge of services offered at DUC. Dominican offers several services to students at no cost. However, many of the students are unaware they exist. According to a focus group participant, “Dominican needs to do a way better job advertising the services as many individuals do not know they exist” (Focus group participant). Currently, there is limited information/advertising around the campus to inform students about the services offered at DUC. This creates a barrier to meeting their occupational needs as students are not getting the support they need due to the lack of knowledge of the services offered.

An additional barrier that affects students from meeting their occupational needs is the competing demands students face. College students often have many different competing obligations that they struggle to manage and balance (see Figure 2), making it difficult to accomplish everything they need to and want to get done. According to a focus group participant, “it is hard to get a good night's sleep when you are up all night doing homework and studying. So it is definitely good to try and balance things like sleep, work, and school” (Focus group participant). This demonstrates that college students are sacrificing their sleep in order to complete school assignments and work, which creates a barrier as sleep is crucial to be able to function. We found that there is a common struggle in finding balance and prioritizing what is and isn't important while also maintaining things like their mental, physical, and emotional health

Figure 2 Areas that students struggle with

If you are currently struggling to manage or balance any of the areas listed below check the box

27 responses



### Supports to meeting occupational needs

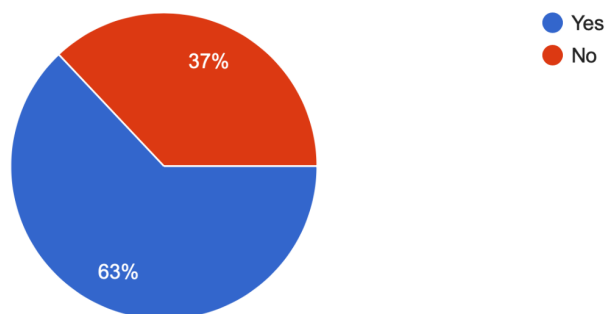
Although there are barriers that limit students from meeting their occupational needs, the results of the needs assessment indicated that Dominican provides many supports that do help students. Dominican's services that are offered to students act as a resource that supports its students in many ways, and it was found that many students do utilize the services provided on campus (see Figure 3). For example, peer mentors connect with and build relationships with students in order to further help them with difficulties they may be experiencing as well as help students navigate their rigorous school schedules. According to an integrative coaching staff, "I think with being a mentor, it really is about relationship building. It is important to work with them now to build that relationship and to understand where they're coming from and to really connect with them on that level" (support staff). Having integrative coaching and peer mentors as a support and resource available to students can help guide them and mentor them throughout their college journey. The services also do their best to listen to student feedback and their needs

in order to best cater to them. During one of our interviews, it was said that “...students were asking for counseling and wanted it and needed it because of a lot of anxiety. Dominican handled it, which is great” (support staff). The student health center had so many people signing up for counseling and therapy that the waitlist was getting too long and could not accommodate all the students in a timely manner. Students had concerns and were requesting more counseling to be available to them, and Dominican was able to find money to bring in the Timely Care Program which allowed students to have 24/7 access to a mental health support line or individual counseling sessions.

*Figure 3 Percentage of students who utilize the services offered on campus versus those that don't*

Do you utilize any of the services offered on campus (i.e., counseling, tutoring, office hours, etc.)

27 responses



We also found that students have various coping skills that are used when facing barriers that help them alleviate stress they experience from school such as participating in occupations they enjoy, leisure activities and spending time with friends and family. One student said that “something I would do if I am super stressed are things like meditation or participating in my favorite occupations such as basketball and hiking” (focus group participant). Since students voiced to us that it is important for them to find time and focus on other occupational needs and

aspects of life besides academics, it could be helpful for DUC to offer more resources and activities to students to support them in meeting their occupational needs and focus on academics. Getting the word out to students more easily can be beneficial as sometimes students don't always know about the resources available, or events announced by the school with only 63% of students in our survey responses saying that they utilize services offered on campus.

### **Services recommended**

After analyzing data from the needs assessment, we were able to pull together a few services that students and faculty at DUC recommended to better support students in meeting their occupational needs. Among recommendations for new services, there were also recommendations for the improvement of pre-existing services on campus. One service that students recommended improvement to was the tutoring services on campus. Although students note that the tutoring services are a support to their education needs, it can also be a barrier since tutoring is currently not available for all existing classes.

A student's concern and need for change in their classes were also brought up. Many students shared their concerns about their course load becoming too stressful at certain times throughout the semester. Students voiced their opinion on the need to have faculty be more open to flexible deadlines when needed and communication with other faculty in the program to decrease the stress and workload that accumulates at certain times in the semester.

Services that are not related to education were also mentioned by students. One example given was to have a massage therapist for students to destress, relax and decompress. Another service recommendation is grab-and-go style snack bars across campus. These suggestions tie back to students' self-care and ability to cater to their mental and physical health. Due to the lack



of activities on campus that could provide a way for students to destress and limited areas students can obtain food or snacks, students feel like the university could do more for them. If students feel they are not being supported well enough to be able to meet their occupational needs, this can lead to stress and other psychosocial factors which could ultimately create barriers to their academic lives. One student from our survey explained “being a college student limits the time that I have to participate in a lot of my occupations, especially leisure occupations. School is always my first priority but it’s hard to find a balance between school work and other things” (student survey response).

The faculty we spoke with shared insight into the many services offered on campus that many students do not know about. Although DUC may offer many services, the faculty believes OT could benefit all services for students by integrating into the system as a whole. The holistic care given and offered by Occupational Therapists is described by using “...skilled services and engagement in everyday activities, occupational therapy promotes physical and mental health and well-being by supporting occupational performance in people with, or at risk of experiencing, a range of developmental, physical, and mental health disorders” (Clark et al., 1991). Holistic care is integral to OT, so integrating OT into all services on campus could have many benefits to not only students, but also faculty in helping them learn to address the holistic occupational needs of students.

### **Implications to OT**

After conducting our needs assessment, we found that Occupational Therapy could be beneficial to various aspects of students' lives and can be implemented on Dominican's campus through the integration of pre-existing services. OT can be beneficial to students because they can provide holistic care, guide students in achieving occupational balance, provide support to students with their transition into both college and the workforce, as well as advocate for students' needs to faculty and staff. Occupational therapists can advocate greatly for college students by using their unique lens and perspective to help them meet their occupational needs, achieve occupational balance, and furthermore, educate faculty in understanding those needs in order to implement a more holistic understanding and view of their students.

Based on our findings, a potential idea for integration might be having an OT collaborate closely with DUC's integrative coaching service when working with students, and this collaboration could work in many different ways. OT could learn so much from the integrative coaches as well as from other staff from other on-campus services. In our interviews with staff, we found that there were some comments and concerns about how there was a lack of communication between all the services, so having more communication when integrating OT on campus would be of utmost importance so that there is a common knowledge of the student population and their needs throughout the services. Not only can OT learn from the staff, but based on their expertise, the OT can also educate and support the staff when working with the students. Integrative coaches could refer students to OT as needed, or OT could already be working with the coaches from the beginning during these sessions. This could be a very flexible and open process that is built on communication on all ends.

Integrating OT with integrative coaching could provide more support for students with their transition into college and their transition out of college into the workforce. They could also help students with their concerns regarding participation in meaningful activities or managing their occupational balance in a more effective manner. OT's would be able to provide a different viewpoint and perspective on how to approach working with students when they come to integrative coaching with their questions and concerns during their time at Dominican. Many students already come to the integrative coaching service for guidance and assistance, and so having OT working with them could increase advocacy for their students as well. OTs would be able to use their expertise to look at students' lives as a whole in order to find ways to best support them during their sessions and, furthermore, their everyday lives.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, through the research we have conducted, we can conclude that Occupational Therapy would be a great resource not only to students, but also faculty and can be easily integrated to other pre-existing services offered on the DUC campus. With one of the primary roles of OT, being an advocate, OT can be very beneficial to the students on campus in making sure their occupational needs are met and overcoming barriers.

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## Appendix A: Survey and Results

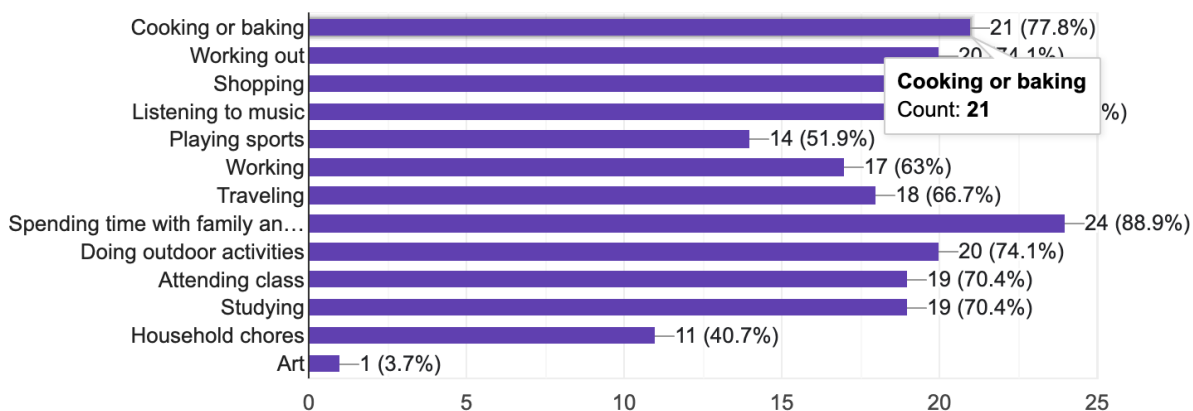
QR code to survey  
on google form



Occupations are part of our daily lives that could involve activities such as cooking, eating, biking, or painting. These are important things that make us who we are and how we live our lives. This can include activities of daily living such as toileting, bathing and feeding. As well as instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) such as shopping, cooking, or even taking care of a pet. Occupations are life activities that give us our passions and needs.

Occupational Needs: Everyone has occupational needs to: (1) choose daily occupations, (2) participate in occupations, (3) have a balance of various occupations in his or her life (eg, self-care, productivity, leisure), and (4) engage in personally meaningful occupations. Unmet occupational needs occur when an individual or group is unable to engage in daily occupations.

**Question 1: What are some occupations (meaningful activities) that you need to do or want to do?**



**Question 2: How do you feel being a college student inhibits your ability to partake in these occupations (meaningful activities)?**

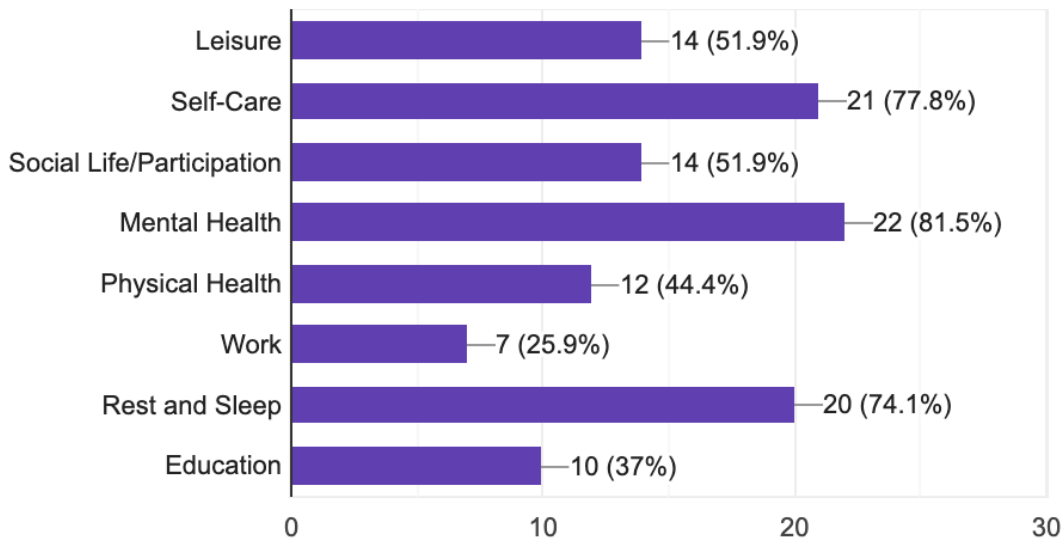
- Classes and school work take up majority of my free time
- Being a college student limits the time that I have to participate in a lot of my occupations, especially leisure occupations. School is always my first priority but it's hard to find balance between school work and other things.
- I feel as if I have no time to do the things I want/need to do because my education consumes most of my time and energy
- School takes so much time and mental energy I can't fully enjoy the times I do other leisure activities without thinking I should be studying or working on schoolwork.
- Challenges my time management
- I feel like I don't have enough time to engage in other activities outside of school. A lot of my time is mostly spent studying. I also don't see my family as much, so I'm not able to spend a lot of time with them.
- I need a car to get around San Rafael. I can't walk to many places if it's too far away.
- I feel like I can't bake or cook for myself because we don't have community kitchens. There's also not much to do in San Rafael.
- Between school and work, I don't have the time to engage in anything outside of these productive occupations

**Question 3: How does being a college student support your ability to engage in these occupations (meaningful activities)?**

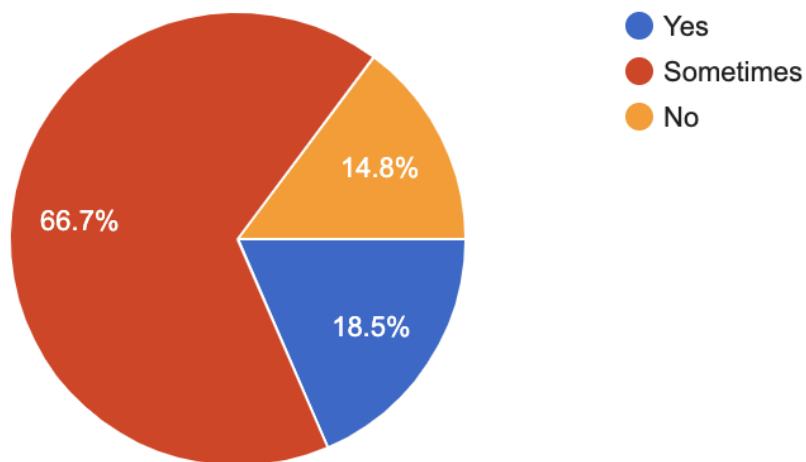


- One way that being a student helps me engage in occupations is that it allows me to be more social as I get to talk to my peers at school while also attending class and studying
- Since my schooling can be stressful and difficult, it encourages me to go out and do the things that de-stress me, like shopping or doing outdoor activities
- It supports my ability to engage in these activities because I have met so many other people in the same major as me and we all try to do one thing a week that doesn't revolve around studying.
- Lets me be on my time rather than always having to do what my parents tell me because I am in college now!
- Being a college student introduces you to many people to expand your social circle, whom which you can do the meaningful activities with.
- Gives structure to my day
- Creating community to engage in these occupations
- Right now, outside of being able to engage in school occupations, being a college student doesn't help me engage in occupations. But i know, it will help me engage in desired occupations in the future.

**Question 4: If you are currently struggling to manage or balance any of the areas listed below check the box**



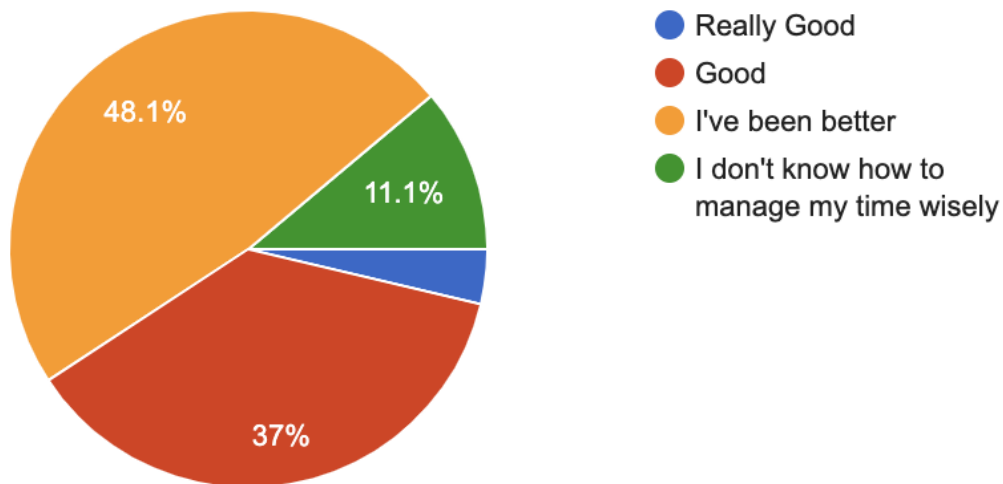
**Question 5: Do you feel like you get all of your occupations or daily activities (including personal, school/work and leisure) done to a standard that is ok for you?**



**Question 6: If not, what things are you prioritizing to do and what do you push off?**

- I prioritize things that need to be turned in and push off study time that I need
- I prioritize school (and within that, certain classes) and work while pushing off leisure, social participation, and mental/physical health.
- I push off studying so I can balance my social life!
- Pushing off work to catch up on sleep.
- Work is usually pushed off when I have to study longer for school because school is the ultimate priority. Lifestyle such as diet and cooking comes second!
- I put school and work first and put leisure, self care and friends off
- I prioritize working out as it is important for my mental health. I also prioritize school work over all my other leisure or other occupations. I tend to push off social gatherings or my social life due to this.
- I prioritize my education but I have a hard time balancing my social life and self care.

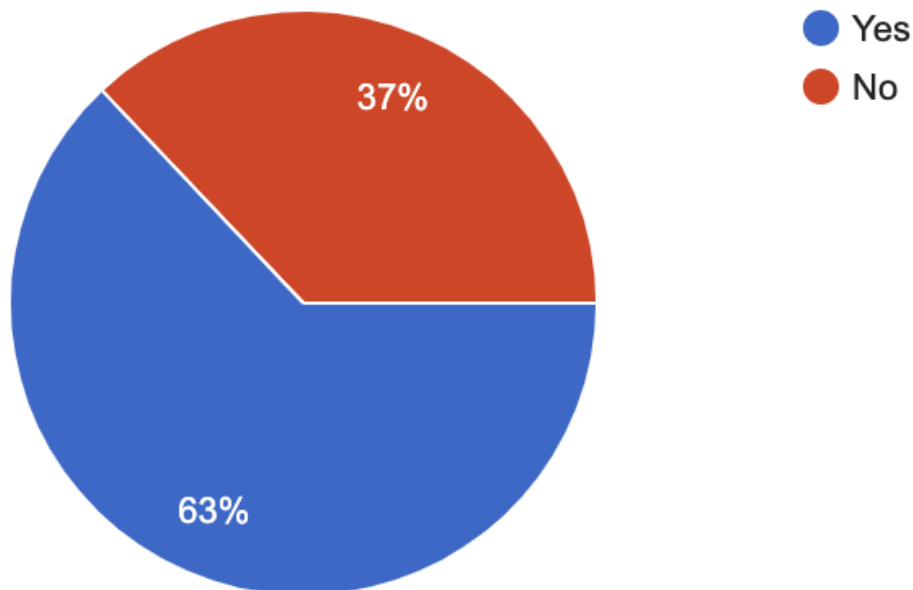
**Question 7: How do you feel about your time management skills?**



**Question 8: What do you think DUC can do to increase your ability to meet your occupational needs?**

- More time to complete our work
- Decrease the workload, and allow more breaks during class
- They're doing a lot already by offering services and recreational activities!
- Have some days off for mental health and help students seek balance.
- Provide more flexibility
- Offer more activities. I just feel like the social life is pretty boring sometimes.
- Have better food!
- More information on services that are on campus that can help with mental health and is easy to find.
- More variety in study/work spaces on campus, more grab and go food options/spots, wider operating hours for food/drinks places (like Chilly's or the library coffee cart that I don't even know if it's still open). Maybe not a DUC, but more departmental change... provide more flexibility/options to complete the required homework policy hours per week.

**Question 9: Do you utilize any of the services offered on campus (i.e., counseling, tutoring, office hours, etc.)**



**Question 10: Do you feel that they help you in the way you need or is there something else you need to support you in a different way?**

- Yes! Tutoring has helped a lot with studying
- I think office hours are really helpful if I have specific questions of my professors.  
Tutoring can be helpful but sometimes (depending on the tutor) it isn't due to them not catering to my preferred learning style or not knowing the answer to my questions. I don't utilize counseling services but it is something that I am interested in potentially utilizing but am also worried that it'll add to my stress as it's adding another thing to schedule into my week
- I just started counseling services and I feel like it's really been supporting my priorities and my self-care
- More motivational support, encourage students to take the services they offer
- I feel like there are many opportunities I can take advantage of but I just don't.

## Appendix B: Interviews

### On Campus Services Interviewed:

- Student Health
- University Counseling Services
- Academic Advising
- Integrative Coaching
- Housing and Residence Life

### Interview Questions:

1. Can you talk a little about your role and duties in \*insert department name\*?
2. What do students typically come to you for help for? Or for what resources/specific needs?
3. Do you feel like you understand the student population and their needs?
4. Do you see any areas of the school resources that are not beneficial to students (any gaps, anything missing, anything that needs to be changed)
5. Do you think there are any resources on campus that you believe need to change?
6. Is there a common characteristic/factor among students that ask for help and stand out to you?
  - a. Is there a common question students have and if so what is it?

### Appendix C: Focus Group Questions

1. What are the most common barriers you face in meeting your occupational needs?
2. What programs/services on campus do you benefit most from right now and why?
3. What programs and services do you wish were available to you to help you meet your needs?
  - What kind of support do you think you'll need that would be helpful to meet these needs?
1. With the current services being offered at DUC are you comfortable enough to seek help from?
  - Have you ever reached out for help from these services?
    - Was it helpful or beneficial to you?
2. What other services do you feel would be helpful and useful for you during your time at DUC?
3. Are there any events or clubs or groups that you feel will allow you to engage in more occupations and help you step out of your comfort zone?
  - If these services are offered to you, would you be willing to try them out?
4. Based on the needs you mentioned today, how could a service be developed that would help you achieve this?
5. If Dominican could provide you with a service that could help you create a balanced life what would that look like?