Rehabilitation and Participation Science

The Rehabilitation and Participation Science (RAPS) PhD program aims to develop rehabilitation scientists whose research questions are chosen based explicitly on their potential to generate rehabilitation knowledge that will enhance health, improve quality of life, reduce illness and disability and optimize participation. In our doctoral training model, students devote the majority of their time to mentored research activities beginning in their first semester, and they then become increasingly independent. Students may choose rehabilitation and participation scientists who hold appointments in the occupational therapy program as mentors to help focus their study in the areas of chronic diseases, evidence-based care, interventions, cognitive rehabilitation, neurorehabilitation, health promotion, decreasing secondary conditions, improving physical fitness for people with disabilities, and rehabilitation outcomes and informatics.

This program is designed to be completed in four to five years of full-time study. There is no provision for part-time study. A tuition stipend and fellowship are provided for up to four years, with the possibility of a one-year extension.

Graduates of the RAPS PhD program will be prepared for careers as academic research scientists.

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Faculty

Chair
Lisa Tabor Connor
Associate Dean and Director of Occupational Therapy
Elias Michael Professor of Occupational Therapy and Professor of Neurology
MA, Washington University
PhD, Washington University

Professors
Carolyn Baum (https://www.ot.wustl.edu/about/our-people/m-carolyn-baum-10/)
Professor of Occupational Therapy, Neurology and Social Work
PhD, Washington University

Chih-Hung Chang
Professor of Occupational Therapy, Medicine and Orthopaedic Surgery
PhD, University of Chicago

Allison King (https://www.ot.wustl.edu/about/our-people/allison-king-48/)
Professor of Occupational Therapy, Medicine, Pediatrics, Surgery (Prevention and Control) and Education
MD, University of Missouri
MPH, Saint Louis University
PhD, Saint Louis University

Associate Professors

Susy Stark
Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy, Neurology and Social Work
PhD, University of Missouri-Columbia
MS, Washington University School of Medicine, Program in Occupational Therapy

Assistant Professors

Erin Foster (https://www.ot.wustl.edu/about/our-people/erin-foster-32/)
Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy, Neurology and Psychiatry
PhD, Washington University, Program in Occupational Therapy

Kerri Morgan (https://www.ot.wustl.edu/about/our-people/kerri-morgan-63/)
Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy and Neurology
PhD, Washington University School of Medicine, Program in Physical Therapy

Benjamin Philip (https://www.ot.wustl.edu/about/our-people/benjamin-philip-73/)
Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy, Neurology and Surgery (Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery)
PhD, Brown University

Instructors

Kelly Harris
Instructor of Occupational Therapy and Surgery (Public Health Sciences)
PhD, Washington University
MA, Northwestern University

Degree Requirements

PhD in Rehabilitation and Participation Science

Applicant Background

Students pursue the RAPS PhD degree because of their desire to generate knowledge to improve rehabilitation practices and thus peoples’ lives through participation. Students with a clinical degree at the bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral level are welcome to apply. Prior research experience is strongly encouraged.
Curriculum

Students must complete core courses, electives to support their area of study, research in their mentor's laboratory, a qualifying exam and a dissertation. Prior graduate courses that explicitly meet the program requirements may be considered (syllabus must be submitted for review and approval of the RAPS PhD chair).

All RAPS PhD students will join faculty in a weekly seminar where faculty and student research is presented and discussed. Presentations will also be made by Washington University faculty and visiting professors whose work will stimulate new areas of study.

Core Courses

- Theories, Models and Classifications of Rehabilitation and Participation Science (RAPS, 3 units)
- Biopsychosocial Factors Affecting Performance (RAPS, 3 units)
- Environmental Factors and Participation (RAPS, 3 units)
- Measurement Theory and Development (RAPS, 3 units)
- Mentored Teaching Experience (RAPS, 1 unit)
- RAPS Seminar (RAPS, 1 unit)

Additional courses will be required in research design methods and graduate statistics.

Research Units

It is expected that all students will be involved in research beginning their first semester and continuing through the completion of the degree. Prior to the completion of courses and the qualifying exam, each student is expected to spend at least 15 to 20 hours per week actively engaged in research. After passing the qualifying exam, students are expected to focus full-time on their dissertation and other research projects. It is anticipated that these efforts will lead to refereed publications and the student becoming an independent scientist.