**Student Interview: Charlotte Exner Summary**

Dr. Charlotte Exner has been influential in shaping occupational therapy (OT) as a career and practice. She serves as faculty and professor for the Department of Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science at Towson University, teaching graduate courses in Assessment and Research and a writing course for the combined BS/MS Occupational Therapy program.

She explained that she has always had a passion for OT, and through involvement in the 4H program, with the philosophy of the head, heart, hands and health and being connected with one another. began to focus on the idea that wellbeing comes from participating in valued occupations. As an Occupational Therapist (OTR), Dr. Exner worked in many different settings including pediatrics, private practices, and group homes. Later, she worked as an adjunct professor at Towson University and John Hopkins University. At Towson, Dr. Exner has worked as a full-time professor, full time Chair Person of the Department of OT and Occupational Science, Department Chair of OT, Graduate Program Director, Dean of The College of Health Professions and Executive Director of the Hussman Center for Adults with Autism.

Dr. Exner stated that many people have had an impact on her career, but one in particular would be Marie-Louise Blount, who was one of the Chairs of the Department of OT at Towson. She, along with others, led an initiative and worked closely with Dr. Penny Kyler, president of MOTA at the time, to gain OT licensure in Maryland. Her work with graduate program director, Dr. Karen Eskow, was significant in supporting of the beginning of the entry level Master’s OT program. Dr. Exner also led the preparation of a grant to offer OT programs to Western Maryland. As Dean of the College of Health Professions, she was involved in initiating and funding the faculty who developed the Autism Studies Certificate Program, and initiated planning for the Institute for Well-Being (IWB) in Towson. The Associate Dean, Dr. Marcie Weinstein and others were involved in planning for the space and programming at the IWB.

Some philosophies that Dr. Exner discussed include: always consider the client and what is important to them, consider the environment and who the individual is as a person, and that “doing” is important. She said that people are driven to feel competent and fulfilled by the things we do. She also discussed OT as a team effort, which is crucial to the profession.

When asked about the influences of political and social climates on her career, Dr. Exner said that she began clinical work soon after the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was enacted, which increased OT opportunities for children in schools. The increasing attention about adults with autism influenced her and many others in beginning the Hussman Center.

Overall, she describes her career as fulfilling and explained that as an OTR, there are so many options in the field and so many roles to fulfill. She also stated that OT provides opportunities to be creative and to work in collaboration with others to reach an end goal, which is a rewarding experience for all. Dr. Exner focused in on some of the philosophies she has on OT, which include always consider the client and what is important to them, consider the environment and who the individual is as a person, and that “doing” is important. She stresses the fact that everyone has this enormous drive to feel competent and fulfilled by the things we do.

Another concept that Dr. Exner discusses is that Occupational Therapy is a team effort- whether it’s therapists working with each other or therapists working together with their clients. She mentioned that someone can have an idea, but it can’t be implemented without the support and help of others. Team effort is a huge benefit in research, but it’s imperative in projects.

Dr. Exner has been involved in organizations such as MOTA and AOTA. She served as Legislative Chair for MOTA, served on the research grant committee for AOTF and was on the board for AJOT, reviewing articles for publication. She explained how we are now in a new era where joining together in associations like MOTA is not how it used to be. Today’s era is one in which virtual communication is used by most people and there is less interest in planning in-person meetings. To her, membership in MOTA allows OTRs to have a sense of belonging and one that provides stimulating communication and believes that it is important to be a part of an organization that gives opportunities to get together and share ideas and challenges with others who have the same interests.

 The main point that Dr. Exner wanted to drive home is to keep a holistic mindset. As an OT, one should take into consideration the entire client, even when focusing on one specific area.