



Establishing Occupational Therapy in Postsecondary Education

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Background

Postsecondary education (PSE) students face multiple occupational performance and participation challenges that may impact their ability to fully engage in the academic environment and have decreased occupational satisfaction (Keptner et al., 2025; Keptner & McCarthy, 2020). Research has found consistent positive outcomes of Occupational Therapy (OT) in PSE settings for academic performance, retention, life skills, executive functioning, well-being, campus engagement, and belonging (Duffy & Burkander, 2025; Keptner et al., 2025; Keptner & McCarthy, 2020)

Colorado State University (CSU) Needs Assessment

- CSU students report higher loneliness, stress, sleep concerns, and academic impacts than peer institutions (ACHA, 2024)
- 3,100+ CSU students sought mental health services in 2023 – 2024 (Cornelius, 2025)
- Long waitlists and limited service capacity of providers
- Limited day-to-day life skills services or programs

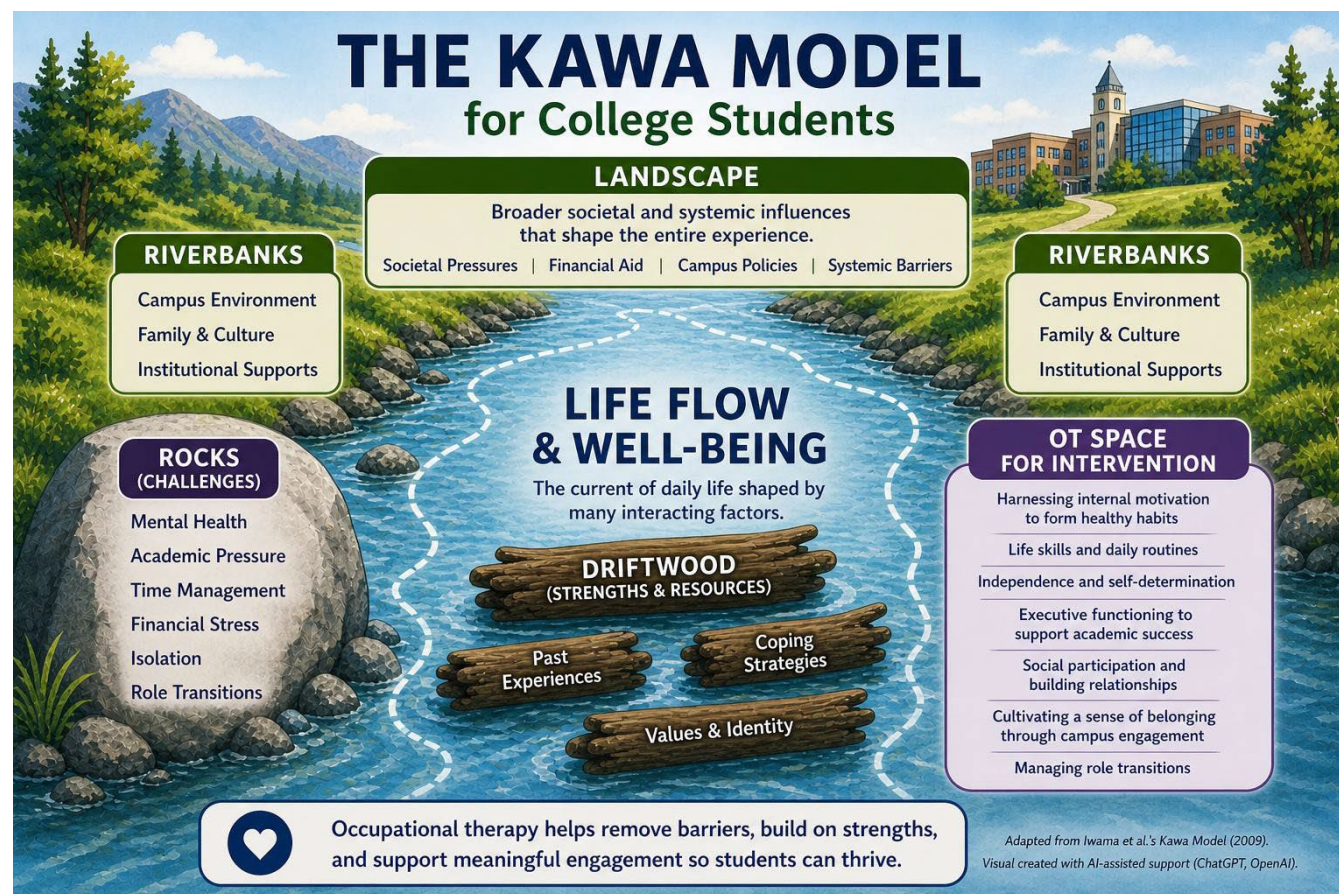
Goals and Objectives

Goal: to develop and support the implementation of a sustainable, evidence-informed occupational therapy program that promotes college students' occupational performance, role participation, and overall well-being.

Objectives

1. Develop a comprehensive operational manual
2. Design a student-centered, evidence-informed OT group intervention
3. Maintain ongoing collaboration with CSU campus stakeholders and remain actively informed by current literature to ensure the program remains responsive to student needs

Kawa Theoretical Model



Adapted from Iwama et al.'s Kawa Model (2009). Visual created with AI-assisted support (OpenAI, 2026)

Program Development

Mission

- Provide accessible, holistic student-centered OT intervention
- At no cost to the student
- Individual + group sessions
- Referrals from CSU campus partners

Proposed Program

- 1-year pilot
- OT works 10 hours a week
- 36–44 CSU students directly served
- Estimated cost: \$24,549

OT-RENEWS

Occupational Therapy for Resilience, Empowerment,
and Navigating Education and Wellness for Students



Evaluation Methods

- Weekly mentorship → Guided project development
- Campus collaboration → Informed campus needs
- Meeting with Dr. Karen Keptner → Expert consultation
- Presenting and networking → Spreading awareness

Operational Manual

Key Components of the Operational Manual

- OT in PSE: Scope and Evidence
- Occupational Needs of Students
- OT-RENEWS to Complement Existing CSU Services
- Caseload
- Projected Budget
- OT Process
 - Evaluation
 - Adapted Occupational Profile for PSE Students
 - Intervention
 - Resources
 - Group Intervention Toolkit
 - Outcomes
 - Program Evaluation
 - Steering Committee
 - Marketing Materials



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Conclusion

Impact

- Developed a realistic, applicable, ready-to-go program for the OT Department
- Provided campus-specific data and evidence supporting OT's value
- Created a pathway to positively impact students' holistic wellness

Sustainability

- Grounded in current evidence
- Uses a holistic, student-centered service model
- Adaptable to multiple funding pathways and campus settings

Stakeholder Meetings

- Created marketing materials to support outreach and program understanding
- Positioned the program for future funding opportunities

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References



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