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# Learning never stops for doctoral student

For Melodie Kondratek, every day is a learning experience. As a student in Oakland's physical therapy doctoral program, this married mother of two manages to pack a full-time job, a full-time course load and a full-time family into one intensely busy schedule.

"Balancing everything is a challenge," Kondratek says. "I've been fortunate that my classes have been either on the weekend or in the evenings or met one night a week, and some are completely online. That's what makes this possible, and it's one of the positives about Oakland's program. If someone out there is interested in getting this degree, they should know this."

A physical therapist with more than two decades of experience, Kondratek recently earned her master's degree in physical therapy at OU and then immediately enrolled in the doctoral program.

"I went back because of changes in the industry," she says. "I felt I needed some updating."

After a career devoted primarily to working with pediatrics and patients with neurological problems, Kondratek turned to orthopedic manual physical therapy (OMPT) at OU.

"It's kind of a unique blend," she says. "I feel that with my skills from the OMPT program, I'll have new ways to administer care."

The fact that much of the OU doctoral program takes students into real-world settings has been significant to this experienced professional.

"The big plus about Oakland's OMPT program is that it's a residency program," Kondratek says.

"This is the only residency program in a university setting that I know about."

Kondratek also is pursuing a physical therapy teaching certificate.

"It's always been my goal to teach," she says. "I knew that I was going to need my doctorate to do that."

As a graduate assistant, Kondratek has completed several stints in front of an undergraduate classroom and has spent numerous hours researching with faculty mentors. Despite the demands of her busy schedule and the rigors of the program, Kondratek has flourished.

"Melodie is an outstanding student, and we feel very lucky to have her," says Beth Marcoux, director of OU's physical therapy program. "She's added a lot to the program."

## SUMMARY

For Melodie Kondratek, every day is a learning experience. As a student in Oakland's physical therapy doctoral program, this married mother of two manages to pack a full-time job, a full-time course load and a full-time family into one intensely busy schedule. A physical therapist with more than two decades of experience, Kondratek recently earned her master's degree in physical therapy at OU and then immediately enrolled in the doctoral program.

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