



SAMMONS CENTER
FOR INNOVATION AND RESEARCH
IN OCCUPATION BASED TECHNOLOGY

Request for Proposals

The Sammons Center for Innovation and Research in Occupation Based Technology invites proposals for funding awards of up to \$3000.00 for a product that will enable people to actively engage and participate in everyday occupation. These products can be devices, technology apps, teaching and learning technologies, and other innovative ideas. The Sammons Center WILL NOT fund personnel or indirect costs. The grant applicant may use funds from the award towards fees that directly support the innovation, such as consulting fees for the design of a product including mechanical, print, video, or computer based applications.

APPLICATION

Proposals are accepted throughout the year with no set deadlines. Fill out pages 1-9 and pay close attention to the comments to guide you through the application. Please submit your proposal to Dr. Holly Grieves, Co-Director, Sammons Center at holly.grieves@wmich.edu.

Diamond D. Sampson

Doctor of Occupational Therapy Student

Name(s) of Lead Innovator(s)

Credentials of Lead Innovator

D.Sampson@usa.edu

(985)750-0511

Email Address

Preferred Contact #

Grant Proposal:

GemGlow Adaptive Tutu Line: Inclusive Dancewear for Every Child

Where every dancer has the opportunity to shine like the true gem they are, designed for dancers of all abilities.

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Twirling Together: A Dancer's Tale of Friendship and Joy

Diamond D. Sampson, SOT

OTD Candidate Doctor of Occupational Therapy Student | Professional Dancer

D.Sampson@usa.edu

Table of Contents

Section A. Resume or CV of lead innovator and team members

Section B. Project Description

Section C. Pictorial Demonstration of Innovation

Section D. Line-Item Budget

Section E. Implementation Plan

Section F. Evaluation Plan

Section A: Resume or CV of lead innovator and team members

Sammons Center
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo MI 49008-5333 USA

Dear Grant Committee:

I am writing to express my sincere passion and purpose in applying for your grant in support of my inclusive children's book and sensory-friendly adaptive dance tutus. This work represents the heart of my mission as both a creative and a clinician-in-training, rooted in the belief that all children, regardless of ability, deserve to feel seen, celebrated, and included in the joy of dance.

Harmony in Motion, my senior doctoral capstone project, was born out of love, friendship, and lived experience. It was inspired by my dear friend Meagan, a gifted and joyful dancer who lives with Down syndrome. Dancing alongside Meagan opened my eyes to the beauty of inclusive movement and the barriers many children face when trying to participate in traditional dance environments. From the textures of costumes to the expectations of performance, I saw firsthand how easily children could be excluded from something that brings so much joy.

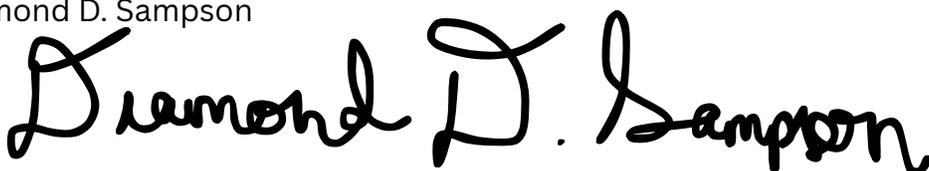
As a lifelong dancer with professional performance experience, I've been privileged to train in environments that nurtured my creativity and confidence. But I've also witnessed how those same spaces can unintentionally leave some children behind. That's why I created a line of sensory-friendly, adaptive tutus—made with thoughtful materials and designed to accommodate sensory processing needs—so that all children can twirl, leap, and shine without discomfort.

In addition to inclusive attire, Harmony in Motion emphasizes the development of motor skills and social participation through dance. Grounded in the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO), my program is designed to meet each child at their “just right challenge,” fostering not only creative expression but also functional growth. Whether it's building confidence through structured movement or learning turn-taking and collaboration in group routines, every element of the program supports holistic development through an occupational therapy lens.

Accompanying these efforts is my self-authored children's book, which celebrates the beauty of friendship, inclusion, and expression through dance. Together, the book and the tutu line reflect the mission of Harmony in Motion: to make dance accessible, joyful, and meaningful for every child.

This project also serves as a personal tribute to my beloved dance teacher, Mr. Kavin T. Grant, who is now in heaven. Mr. Grant saw something in me before I ever saw it in myself, and I carry his belief in my potential with every step I take. To receive this grant would not only fund the next phase of my work, but it would honor the legacy of a teacher who pushed me to dream big and dance boldly. Thank you for your time, your generosity, and your commitment to supporting projects that make a difference. It would mean the world to me to have your support in bringing this vision to life.

With heartfelt gratitude,
Diamond D. Sampson

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diamond D. Sampson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent initial "D".

Diamond D. Sampson

 985-750-0511

 dsamp2k22@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Alabama State University

Summa Cum Laude Graduate

University of St. Augustine-Dallas

Doctor of Occupational Therapy Student
Student of Occupational Therapy Association Member
Texas Occupational Therapy Association Member

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Creator, *Harmony in Motion* – Adaptive Dance Program

Senior Capstone Student March – July 2025

- Developed and launched an inclusive dance program for children with disabilities, integrating OT principles to support motor skills, sensory regulation, and social participation.
- Authored a 35-page sustainability guide with adaptable lesson plans, sensory strategies, visual supports, and instructor training tools.
- Applied the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) to tailor activities to each child's "just right challenge."
- Collaborated with Tutu School Cypress to implement the program and train staff in inclusive practices.
- Created a structured visual rewards system to increase engagement and independence.

Houston Pediatrics – Houston, TX

Level II Fieldwork Student | Sept 2024 – November 2024

- Delivered skilled occupational therapy services to pediatric clients in both home health and outpatient settings, focusing on functional outcomes and family-centered care.
- Applied evidence-based strategies to enhance fine and gross motor skills, sensory integration, and developmental milestones across diverse pediatric populations.
- Designed and implemented individualized treatment plans tailored to each child's needs, strengths, and therapeutic goals.
- Provided caregiver education and training to support carryover of therapeutic activities in the home environment, empowering families as active participants in care.
- Collaborated effectively with multidisciplinary teams, including speech therapists, physical therapists, and pediatricians, to ensure a coordinated and holistic approach to treatment.
- Maintained clear, timely, and HIPAA-compliant documentation of patient progress, goals, and outcomes using electronic health record systems.

Fyzical Therapy and Balance Centers – Sherman, TX

Level II Fieldwork Student | May 2024 – August 3, 2024

- Delivered outpatient occupational therapy services focused on hand and upper extremity rehabilitation, including evaluations, manual therapy, and therapeutic interventions.
- Applied evidence-based techniques to improve hand strength, dexterity, range of motion, and functional performance following orthopedic injuries and post-operative procedures.
- Developed and implemented individualized treatment plans for conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendon repairs, fractures, and arthritis.
- Educated patients on customized home exercise programs and adaptive strategies to support independence and long-term recovery.
- Collaborated with hand surgeons, physical therapists, and other providers to deliver coordinated, patient-centered care.
- Maintained thorough, HIPAA-compliant documentation of patient progress, clinical observations, and treatment outcomes using electronic medical records.

Major Arena Soccer League Dancer 2022-2024

- Represented the Dallas Sidekicks as a dancer, enhancing the game day experience with high-energy performances and engaging with diverse audiences.
- Collaborated with teammates to deliver synchronized, dynamic routines, fostering a unified and cohesive dance team environment.
- Efficiently navigated the demands of being a Doctor of Occupational Therapy student while prioritizing excellence in dance performance.
- Interacted with fans and the community through promotional appearances, advocating for the team's brand and supporting its outreach initiatives.
- Collaborated with teammates to choreograph and perform a flash mob at DFW Airport for its 50th anniversary, garnering positive attention as the event was featured on local news, creating excitement in the community.
- Modeled Dallas Wear dance uniforms for social media content, amplifying the team's brand presence and supporting marketing initiatives to boost visibility and engagement across digital platforms.

Miss Pelican State | 2022-2023

- Represented Northern Louisiana within the Miss America Organization, advocating for children with special needs through public outreach and community service.
- Engaged in leadership roles, collaborating with local organizations to enhance programs and support services for children with mental disabilities.
- Championed inclusivity by initiating advocacy efforts and fostering greater awareness and support for children with diverse abilities.

Miss Slidell | 2020-2022

- Represented the city of Slidell within the Miss America Organization, promoting community initiatives and engaging in local events.
- Advocated for children with disabilities by raising awareness through public speaking and supporting community service projects.
- Served as a role model for young women, championing inclusivity and fostering support for children with disabilities.

COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCE

Alabama State University Sensational Stingette Dance Team 2018-2019

- Represented Alabama State University as a Sensational Stingette, captivating audiences with dynamic dance performances during halftime shows and events.
- Performed in a marketing commercial for Vance Law Firm, enhancing brand visibility through expressive and engaging movement.
- Marched in the prestigious Rose Bowl Parade in 2019 showcasing precision dance routines and school spirit on national television.
- Collaborated with band members and staff to enhance overall performance quality and foster team cohesion.
- Engaged in community outreach events, promoting school pride and supporting local initiatives.

INTERESTING FACTS

- I'm basically a real-life Princess Tiana—born where the music's loud, the food's soulful, and the hearts are big. A proud Louisiana native with a deep love for crawfish boils, gumbo, and big dreams stirred with even bigger purpose.
- When I'm not twirling in a tutu or advocating for inclusive spaces, you'll find me surviving OT school one Dutch Bros Coffee run at a time (extra caramel, please!). I've visited over 20 locations across multiple states, and yes—I judge a city by its coffee, its dance floors, and how well it keeps up with an eight-count.

Section B. Project Description

Background and Problem Statement:

Imagine a child standing on the sidelines, watching their friends twirl in beautiful tutus, longing to join but held back by discomfort, sensory overload, or the simple fact that the costume isn't made for them. For countless children with developmental disabilities, this is a daily reality. Traditional ballet attire, while lovely, often becomes a barrier—scratchy fabrics, tags, tight seams—sensory challenges that make participation painful or impossible. These children aren't just missing out on dance; they are missing out on a vital childhood experience that nurtures motor skills, emotional expression, confidence, and most importantly, a sense of belonging. This exclusion is heartbreaking because movement is so much more than physical activity. It is connection, joy, identity, and hope. But without adaptations, many children with sensory sensitivities, motor delays, or communication challenges are left on the outside looking in, their potential hidden beneath layers of frustration and isolation.

Client Population:

This project is intended to serve children of all abilities, including the radiant, resilient children with Down syndrome, autism, sensory processing challenges, and developmental disabilities. Every child deserves to be seen, celebrated, and included. This project also supports their families, who tirelessly advocate for acceptance and opportunity, often without the tools or resources to do so effectively. This project offers hope and empowerment to both children and caregivers, fostering community and love.

Distinct Innovation:

This project is not just a product line; it is a revolution in inclusion. The GemGlow adaptive tutu line is thoughtfully crafted from soft, sensory-friendly fabrics with magical glow-in-the-dark elements that invite children to step into a world where they truly belong. Each tutu mirrors a character in the companion children's book, which tells Emerald's story—a story of courage, friendship, and self-expression. Emerald is a vibrant child who lives with Down syndrome, is non-verbal, and loves ballet. Her story is lovingly narrated by her best friend, Gemma, who helps readers see the world through empathy, play, and acceptance. This book breaks barriers by including a sign language component, teaching children—especially those who are non-verbal—a joyful and accessible way to communicate and connect. Together, the tutus and the book create a living, breathing experience—a bridge from imagination to reality, from exclusion to celebration. This innovation empowers children to move freely, express themselves fully, and build the motor and sensory skills essential not just for dance, but for daily life. For parents, it is a powerful tool to spark advocacy and pride. For children, it is a reminder that every movement matters, every voice belongs—even the silent ones—and that there should always be room for kindness in choreography.

Intended Outcomes:

The goal is to tear down the walls that keep children from participating fully in life's beautiful moments. It fosters skill development in motor planning, sensory regulation, and emotional resilience, while nurturing social participation and self-care, core areas of occupational therapy. But beyond skills, it offers something even more profound: belonging. Confidence. Joy. A chance for every child to shine like the true gem they are. With your support, this project will transform lives, bringing inclusive dance, acceptance, and hope to communities that need it most. Together, we can ensure that no child watches from the sidelines ever again.

Section C. Pictorial Demonstration of Innovation



This is a prototype of my logo, which is designed to glow in the dark when featured on the tutus.

Tutu A:



The tutu will feature a custom material blend and be color-matched to Gemma's illustrated tutu for consistency in style and character recognition.

Tutu B:



The tutu will feature a custom material blend and be color-matched to Emerald's illustrated tutu for consistency in style and character recognition. It will be in the hue above.

Section D. Line-Item Budget

Item:	Cost	Use/Justification
Full Book Illustration (all pages)	\$1,130	Professionally illustrated book that centers disabled children and fosters inclusion in movement and literacy.
Custom Character-Inspired Tutu Prototype 1	30	Full sensory-friendly customization for two tutu designs to pair with book characters.
Production of 200 Adaptive Character Tutus	1,600	Start-up batch of two adaptive tutu designs (100 each), supporting scale and accessibility.
Sensory-Informed Packaging & Labeling	40	Educational care guides and labeling for families, therapists, and instructors.
Photography/Video Demonstration Materials	200	Visual documentation for implementation, marketing, and instructional use.
Total Costs: 3,000		

Section E. Implementation Plan

Stage	Outcome	Contributors
Stage I:	Finalized book illustrations + tutu design	Illustrator, Tutu Manufacturer, Me Fall 2025
Stage II:	Fabric + sensory testing with Harmony in Motion students	past students, Studio Instructors, me Fall 2025
Stage III:	Begin 200 tutu production (100 of each character)	Manufacturer Fall 2025
Stage IV:	Create packaging, launch marketing campaign, distribute book + tutu sets	Me, Print Vendors Fall 2025
Stage V:	Distribute to clinics, studios, and inclusive classrooms	Me Fall 2025

Section F. Evaluation Plan

Stage	Outcome	Outcome Evaluation Plan
Stage I:	Final products (book + tutus) meet design and inclusion goals	Comparison with OT standards, inclusive storytelling review, and prototype evaluation of both the book and tutu designs. Fall 2025
Stage II:	Children successfully engage with tutu sets	Parent/staff feedback, sensory tolerance assessments, and observation of how children interact with tutus during play or dance. Fall 2025
Stage III:	Efficient production and quality assurance for book + tutus	Sample testing of printed books and tutus, small batch evaluations for consistent quality and safety. Fall 2025
Stage IV:	Materials are accessible, inclusive	Books/Tutus to be sold in accessible areas Fall 2025
Stage V:	Positive impact on participation, confidence, and inclusion	Surveys, photos, and testimonials from families, teachers, and therapists showing how the sets support engagement in both literacy and movement Fall 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to share my passion and vision with you. As a full-time Doctor of Occupational Therapy student, this project is a heartfelt extension of both my academic training and personal journey. With no other sources of funding, your support is essential in helping me bring this inclusive innovation to life—one that empowers children of all abilities to move, connect, and shine.

While I do not have a disability myself, this work is deeply rooted in the disability community. It was inspired by my dear friend Meagan, who has Down syndrome, and shaped by the children I serve through my clinical experience and adaptive dance program. This initiative is more than a product—it is a bridge to representation, access, and joy.

Thank you again for considering my application. I am truly honored, and I look forward to the possibility of bringing GemGlow to the children and families who need it most.

Warmly,

Diamond D. Sampson

Doctor of Occupational Therapy Student

University of St. Augustine – Dallas Campus