Denise Donica, DHSc, OTR/L, BCP is an Associate Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy. She completed her doctorate in health sciences at the University of Indianapolis in December 2007 and then joined the faculty at ECU in May 2008. Dr. Donica was recently promoted to the rank of Associate Professor with tenure in her department - congratulations! Her research has expanded from working on handwriting skills facilitating academic success with children in pre-school and elementary school levels to advancing treatment delivery of services, such as handwriting and keyboard skills, to children using telehealth. Dr. Donica also serves as the Graduate Program Director in Occupational Therapy and is a strong advocate for her students and ensuring they are well prepared for careers in occupational therapy.

1. What do you like best about working at ECU?

I love the support from the colleagues in my department and college for the work that I do. I love interacting with the students who select to attend our program as well as the prospective students considering it. In addition, North Carolina is a beautiful state and I love calling it and ECU my home.

2. What do you find most exciting about your research and its potential?

My research is at a pivotal point. I have spent my first 6 years here researching handwriting skills related to student success and the pre-school and elementary school level. I am now branching out of this specific area within pediatric occupational therapy to explore the delivery of occupational therapy services to children via telehealth, the role and impact of occupational therapy in the NICU environment, handwriting assessment, and keyboarding skill instruction. I love exploring new areas within the field of occupational therapy and providing support to assist my fellow clinicians with evidence-based practice.

3. What excites you about teaching?

The most exciting aspect of teaching is seeing the passion that I have for occupational therapy shared by others as they learn about the profession and become occupational therapists. Seeing the students on the first day of their graduate school journey and then how they progress through the program into entry-level clinicians parallels the progress I would see daily in clients during my clinical practice. There is nothing nothing more
fulfilling then watching individuals set goals, strive for them, and meet them no matter if they are clients or students.

4. **What do you hope students take away from their experiences working with you on your research?**

My goal for students regarding research is to have an appreciation for and understanding of research. I strive for them to understand the process of research and the importance of flexibility but also to understand the importance of continuing to look at research regularly after they enter their next phase of life as clinicians. A secondary goal that I have for research is that every student gets the experience to present and/or publish their research as a contribution to the field of occupational therapy.

5. **What is your favorite teaching or research moment?**

My favorite moments are when the students are in the community, either for research or a classroom project, and they experience an "a-ha" moment putting all of the pieces together.