

RESOLUTION J
Movement to Required Post baccalaureate Level of Education

WHEREAS, contemporary practice arenas require occupational therapists, including new graduates, to demonstrate an unprecedented level of advanced clinical reasoning; and

WHEREAS, new graduates, now more than ever, need to define, demonstrate and articulate the uniqueness and value of occupational therapy; and

WHEREAS, new graduates need to be capable of functioning as autonomous professionals and must be encouraged to see themselves in this role; and

WHEREAS, practice arenas are shifting and therapists are challenged to establish programs in areas where occupational therapy services have not previously been offered; and

WHEREAS, new graduates enter settings and are challenged to make decisions and engage in a level of clinical decision-making previously reserved for experienced clinicians; and

WHEREAS, the move to the post baccalaureate level is apt to clarify the delineation between professional and technical education; and

WHEREAS, movement to post baccalaureate entry is consistent with current trends in other related professions; and

WHEREAS, analyses conducted by the COE Entry-Level Task Force confirm that the environment reinforces current readiness to move to this level; and

WHEREAS, currently, many graduates of entry-level programs have essentially been conferred the baccalaureate degree for the equivalent of masters level education; and

WHEREAS, preparation of more therapists at the post baccalaureate degree level is likely to meet the current and future needs for qualified faculty in our education programs; and

WHEREAS, preparation at the post baccalaureate degree level would position occupational therapy to better meet personnel needs in emerging practice arenas including effective and cost efficient staffing patterns; and

WHEREAS, movement to post baccalaureate degree entry reflects and acknowledges the complexity of our knowledge base and the high degree of professional judgment required for practice; and

WHEREAS, the preparation of occupational therapists at the post baccalaureate level would address the needs for more outcomes research supporting the tenets of occupational therapy practice, efficacy interventions and staffing models;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the official position of AOTA is one that supports a post baccalaureate degree in occupational therapy as the required level of professional entry into the field of occupational therapy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AOTA recommend that ACOTE consider the implications of a required post baccalaureate degree in occupational therapy and, if feasible, move the Standards for an Accredited Educational Program for the Occupational Therapists to the post baccalaureate degree level; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AOTA recommend that ACOTE establish timelines whereby established programs must be at the post baccalaureate degree level in order to be re-accreditation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AOTA recommend that ACOTE establish timelines whereby new programs must be at the post baccalaureate degree level in order to receive initial accreditation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that AOTA insure the membership that all rights and privileges of occupational therapists who have graduated from baccalaureate degree programs prior to the implementation of this change will be continued; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Executive Board identify and charge appropriate groups within the AOTA to make support available to baccalaureate professional level occupational therapists for addressing their concerns and their professional development activities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Executive Board identify and charge appropriate groups within the AOTA to develop and make support available to professional level occupational therapy educational programs to facilitate their transition to the post baccalaureate degree level.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that information regarding this transition be communicated in AOTA publications

Motion: I move adoption of Resolution J.

The Speaker recognized Leader of Task Group 2, Dan Lipka, for a report. Task Group 2 recommends adoption of Resolution J as amended.

Rationale:

1. ACOTE has already adopted higher professional entry level standards which will take effect in July, 2000. ACOTE reports that bachelor's level occupational therapy educational programs will have great difficulty meeting these new accreditation standards.
2. ACOTE reported that over 60% of the accredited and developing programs have already decided on their own to move to a post baccalaureate level.
3. ACOTE also reported that only about 12 of the 62 existing or developing programs may be affected by this change because they are only in a bachelor's level educational institution. ACOTE/COE have explored numerous options for these programs to help them address this change.
4. Some constituents expressed concern regarding how the role and responsibilities of the OTA's might be influenced by this resolution. This resolution only addresses professional level degree education and does not address the OTA degree level.
5. There was constituent concern that culturally diverse groups may not be targeted for recruitment, admission and graduation from post baccalaureate programs. COE reported that when Physical Therapy (PT) moved to master's level entry, there was in fact an increase among applicants from culturally diverse groups.
6. Financial concerns of students were identified and discussed. These included:
 - A. Students may have more difficulty gaining financial aid on a graduate level,
 - B. Students may have a greater debt from which to recover as a new clinician,
 - C. Increased cost of graduate education may adversely affect culturally diverse applicants more than majority populations.
 - D. Cost of graduate education may deter applicants from lower income brackets.The Task Group felt that although these concerns may cause some challenges, the benefits to the

profession as a whole far outweigh these individual issues.

The Speaker recognized the Representative from Oregon, Karen Foley who moved to amend Resolution J, by addition of “Therefore, be it further resolved that the RA supports ACOTE's timeline to be as responsive and timely as possible.”

THE RESOLUTION WAS AMENDED

The Speaker recognized the Representative from Mississippi, Peter Giroux who made a motion for a substitution to the amendment of the word “recommends” for “supports”.

THE RESOLUTION WAS AMENDED A SECOND TIME
THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED AS AMENDED TWICE
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