California Society for Respiratory Care
Position Paper
Support of Respiratory Care Baccalaureate Degree Programs
for California Practitioners

Background
The profession of Respiratory Care began over half a century ago and has evolved from an on-the-job trained workforce to a college educated and licensed profession. In this era, Respiratory Care Practitioners are expected to assess and quantify their patient’s conditions while appropriately applying algorithmic protocols in the provision of respiratory care. Critical thinking, decision-making, and competence to perform these responsibilities are demanded of practitioners at an advanced level.†

Increased education thresholds are required to advance the practice of respiratory care and can result in the following‡:

- Prepare advanced level Respiratory Care Practitioners for clinical practice.
- Provide leadership training in the areas of management, supervision, education and research.
- Develop clinical specialists in the areas of adult critical care, pediatric critical care, neonatal critical care, pulmonary function technology and cardiopulmonary diagnostics, polysomnography, and other clinical areas, as needed.
- Prepare future faculty for respiratory care educational programs.
- Develop individuals who can formulate appropriate questions, organize and test hypotheses, and apply research results to the practice of respiratory care.
- Prepare clinical practitioners with advanced knowledge and skills in basic and clinical sciences.
- Prepare leaders, who are able to plan, develop, and deliver high quality, cost-effective health care services.

The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) established a “2015 and Beyond” taskforce to determine changes required by the profession needed to meet the evolving healthcare demands as vital members of the medical community for 2015 and beyond. Among many recommendations, the taskforce identified that Respiratory Care students must obtain the education and training at minimum through a US Department of Education recognized baccalaureate program beginning year 2020. ‡

In 2013, the California Society for Respiratory Care published a position paper advocating to increase standards for Respiratory Care Practitioners identifying the Registered Respiratory Therapist credential as the entry point for licensure. This position strategically aligns the profession for upcoming changes in healthcare, improves patient care outcomes, improves consumer confidence, and provides leadership to advance the profession. ‡
Recognizing the importance of Respiratory Care Practitioners competence in providing quality, safe care to the citizens of California, the Respiratory Care Board of California (RCB) has legislated the Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) Credential as a minimum standard for licensure beginning the year 2015.\textsuperscript{v}

In conjunction with increased credentialing standards, California needs to produce Baccalaureate degree practitioners to provide qualified, competent practitioners for the 21\textsuperscript{st} century workplace. Currently there is only one established Respiratory Care Baccalaureate program in the state which resides in a private four-year institution. There are no Respiratory Care baccalaureate programs residing in public educational institutions.

Well respected, high quality education institutions can help fill the gaps in our higher education systems by granting baccalaureate degrees for specific areas in order to meet growing demands for skilled, competent health care providers. They can provide quality baccalaureate education through already well established, well recognized programs. The established programs can deliver the education to the same rigor and quality with lower costs to students than traditional four-year universities, enabling place-bound local students the opportunity to earn the baccalaureate degree needed for new job opportunities and promotion.

Efforts to support baccalaureate degree access for specific discipline areas are being addressed in different ways across the nation.\textsuperscript{vi} Twenty one other states, from Florida to Hawaii already allow multiple pathways to baccalaureate degrees.\textsuperscript{vii}
Resolution
The California Society for Respiratory Care (CSRC) fully supports all efforts to provide opportunities for Respiratory Care Practitioners to obtain baccalaureate degrees in Respiratory Care.

The CSRC also requests beginning January 2020, the Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) adopt accreditation standards that recognize the baccalaureate degree as the minimum education standard for all future Respiratory Care Practitioners.

We recognize the urgent need to fill this gap for educating qualified, competent Respiratory Care Practitioners for the 21st century and for California.

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ii White Paper from AARC Steering Committee of the Coalition for Baccalaureate and Graduate Respiratory Therapy Education. Development of Baccalaureate and Graduate Degrees in Respiratory Care
iii Barnes, Kacmarek, et. Al. Transitioning the Respiratory Therapy Workforce for 2015 and Beyond. Respir Care 2011; 56(5): 681-90
v Respiratory Care Board Meeting Materials. Apr 4, 2014: 36.
http://www.rcb.ca.gov/about_us/meetings/meeting_materials2_4-4-14.pdf
vi SB 850 Baccalaureate Degree Pilot Programs
http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/portals/0/reportsTB/2014_01_BacDegree_StudyGroup_WEB.pdf

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