

**Introduction to the Special Issue, Part II****Looking Forward: The Future of Recreation Therapy/Therapeutic Recreation Education**

M. Jean Keller, *Guest Editor*

In the *Therapeutic Recreation Journal (TRJ)*, volume XLVII, number 3, part one of the special issue, on “The Future of Recreation Therapy/Therapeutic Recreation Education” (RT/TR), an exploration of the history of accreditation using the Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COARPT) model was presented. This nearly 40-year history demonstrates the profession’s commitment to quality undergraduate education by focusing on student performance and continuous improvement in curriculum development and delivery. The second article illustrated major trends and issues in higher education as they impact RT/TR professional preparation programs. A key issue was identified that emphasized educational reform to enhance teaching effectiveness leading to improved graduation rates and the development of competent, caring, and workforce-readied professionals. RT/TR professionals and higher education faculty have been working together for over 16 years to ensure the curriculum is relevant, rigorous, and related to the practice. The therapeutic recreation curriculum survey compared results over

this time to highlight curricular reform and assessment practices in postsecondary education.

In part two of *TRJ*’s special issue on the future of RT/TR education, we will look forward, as this generation of professionals readies the way for the next generation. Lynn S. Anderson describes the development of guidelines for learning outcomes for therapeutic recreation education among higher education institutions seeking COARPT accreditation. These new learning outcomes focus on therapeutic recreation foundations, processes, administration, and internships with overtones of reflection and evaluation. There are many facets to RT/TR and scope of practice is remarkably wide. Thomas K. Skalko shares information about the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education and the Committee on Accreditation for Recreation Therapy Education (CARTE) accreditation program for RT/TR education programs. The focus of CARTE is the need for an independent accreditation for RT/TR as an allied health profession. The CARTE outcomes are based on the American Therapeutic Recreation Asso-

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ciation's *Guidelines for Competency Assessment and Curriculum Planning in RT Practice*. The demand for postsecondary education in healthcare professional and technical occupations is the third highest after science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and education (Georgetown Public Policy Institute, 2012).

Bok (2013) identified two areas in need of improvement in higher education: 1) increasing the percentage of students who graduate from college, and 2) improving the quality of undergraduate education. He concluded the faculty care about students and need to better understand how to create environments that support their learning. In order to improve the quality of undergraduate education, RT/TR faculty are challenged to engage students in discovering new ideas. Two articles, in this special issue, demonstrate faculty as change agents who desire to create meaningful teaching and learning experiences with RT/TR students. Innovative Douglas College faculty and undergraduate students are developing a research culture through community engagement. The integration of research, teaching, and learning is designed to prepare therapeutic recreation specialists who can deliver evidence-based practice upon graduation. Collaboration, an essential workforce skill, is shown to be at the heart of this creative student development experience.

The final article in the second part of this special issue embraces intergenerational learning within the therapeutic recreation classroom and curriculum as a means for exploring aging processes. The number of people reaching retirement will double in number by 2030, accounting for 20% of the U.S. population. The Institute of Medicine's (2008) report,

*Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce*, notes the significant shortage in the current workforce trained to care for the needs of our nation's older adults. Genoe, Crosbie, Johnson, Sutherland, and Goldberg share the importance of innovative teaching and learning practices and the challenges in preparing and readying students to benefit from new ways of instruction. Likewise, students participating in intergenerational activities are better prepared to meet the social and health needs of older adults.

Looking forward, the future is bright, thanks to dedicated faculty and practitioners who are providing meaningful learning experiences to prepare RT/TR professionals in the 21st century. Future RT/TR professionals will be well-prepared to address the challenges in healthcare and social services where they will work and serve diverse populations.

Sincerest thanks are expressed to the contributors, of this two-part special issue on "The Future of Recreation Therapy/Therapeutic Recreation," who believe in the future of RT/TR education and are working to make it more effective and efficient. The manuscript reviewers worked in a competent, caring, and timely manner providing constructive recommendations that made the articles meaningful to the RT/TR profession. The reviewers contributed to this work with their feedback regarding rigor, relevance, and readability and the authors graciously accepted this input. My heartfelt appreciation is extended to the outstanding reviewers: Lynn Anderson, SUNY Cortland; Cynthia Carruthers, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Dana Dempsey, Texas Scottish Rite Hospital (Dallas, TX); Rebecca Glover, University of North Texas; Jan Hodges, Texas State University; San-

dra W. Klitzing, Illinois State University; La Crosse; and Jerry Singleton, Dalhousie  
Susan E. Murray, University of Wisconsin University.

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