Therapeutic recreation curricula is linked to other professional activities that define the profession, such as accreditation, credentialing, and standards of practice. The purpose of this study was to examine the state-of-the-art in therapeutic recreation curricula in three areas: (a) accreditation, (b) curriculum, and (c) internship characteristics. The results showed that therapeutic recreation curricula were housed in diverse universities and departments that have unique characteristics. The majority of responding institutions held NRPA/AALR accreditation status, and most planned to continue to seek re-accreditation. There was very little uniformity in course offerings, although those universities offering 3, 4, and 5 required therapeutic recreation courses seemed to be the most parallel. Almost 94% of the institutions required that therapeutic recreation students complete internships under agency supervisors who were NCTRC certified. Several recommendations were made for therapeutic recreation faculty and the national organizations.

Educational accreditation, personnel credentialing, standards of practice, and professional preparation are linked in their ability to define the boundaries of a profession. These activities, and others, become the foundation for all other efforts toward professionalization.
As such, it is vital that they are timely, improvement-oriented, have a strong degree of consensus within the field, and are linked to the entry-level knowledge base of the profession. In therapeutic recreation, the entry-level knowledge base has been studied (e.g., Oltman, Norback, & Rosenfeld, 1989; Stumbo, 1986), especially with concern for how it is translated into professional preparation curricula (e.g., Anderson & Stewart, 1980; Connolly & Riley, 1995/96; Peterson & Connolly, 1981; Stewart & Anderson, 1990).

It has been noted elsewhere in the literature that systematic efforts in therapeutic recreation curriculum design have been limited and lacking in the theoretical and methodological constructs necessary to define a knowledge base and to make sound curricular decisions (Austin, 1980; Stumbo, 1986). Studies related to curriculum design have focused on the status of college and university offerings (Anderson & Stewart, 1980; Martin, 1971; Stein, 1970; Stewart & Anderson, 1990), the definition of entry-level knowledge and its relationship to the professionalization process (Connolly & Riley, 1995/96; McGhee, 1987; Oltman, Norback, & Rosenfeld, 1989; Skalko & Smith, 1989; Stumbo, 1986; Witman & Shank, 1987), course offerings and content popularity (American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1973; Anderson & Leitner, 1978; Brasile, 1992; Kelley, Robb, Park & Halberg, 1976; Kinney & Witman, 1996; Lindley, 1970; Peterson & Connolly, 1981; Smith, 1976), and the status of therapeutic recreation curricula on campuses during periods of change and challenge (Austin & Hamilton, 1992; Compton & Austin, 1994/95).

The purpose of the present study was to examine therapeutic recreation curricula across the country and to describe their current status with regard to seven characteristics: (a) unit characteristics, (b) faculty, (c) students, (d) accreditation status, (e) curricular offerings, (f) internship requirements, and (g) graduation and placement rates. These seven areas provided the basis for the mailed survey development, as well as the analysis and reporting of results. Due to the expansiveness of the data and the limited space available, the present article focuses primarily on (a) accreditation status, (b) curriculum characteristics, and (c) internship requirements. Also included are some data on unit, faculty, and student characteristics so that the sample is described for the reader.

**A Review of Curriculum Design and Research in Therapeutic Recreation**

Therapeutic recreation was first recognized as a “specialty area” during the first national conference on the College Training of Recreation Leaders in 1937 at the University of Minnesota. The Athletic Institute sponsored two conferences in the late 1940s and early 1950s to develop graduate study curricular guidelines (Lindley, 1970). The outcome of a meeting between the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation and the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, as reported by Lindley, was a core curriculum for graduate study in hospital recreation.

Since these beginning efforts, the evolving status of therapeutic recreation curricula has been reported in a series of national studies. In the first national curriculum study to include a survey of therapeutic recreation options, Stein (1970) reported that 35 out of 114 institutions with recreation and park programs offered therapeutic recreation options. Results of a study conducted by Martin (1971) supported the premise that course offerings did not necessarily coincide with a “bona fide” therapeutic recreation option. A number of the surveyed schools (80 out of 98 surveyed) offered course and/or fieldwork training in some aspect of therapeutic recreation service.

Popularity of courses among professional leaders was explored by Lindley (1970) and Smith (1976). Each author noted the significance of fieldwork, internships, introduction to therapeutic recreation, therapeutic recreation
programming, and psychology classes in professional preparation, although they found little agreement in curricular design.

In a 10 year follow-up to the Stein (1970) study, Anderson and Stewart (1980) reported the existence of therapeutic recreation curricula by title separate from recreation/leisure curricula by title. Of the 157 responding institutions, 92 reported options, 24 identified separate therapeutic recreation degrees, and 23 reported offering general recreation with courses in therapeutic recreation (Anderson & Stewart, 1980). A second 10 year follow-up study (Stewart & Anderson, 1990) found a decrease in the number of curricula by 32 (i.e., 105 out of 163 respondents reported offering curricula) and a leveling-off of the number of accredited programs.

Several more recent studies (Anderson & Leitner, 1978; Brasile, 1992; Peterson & Connolly, 1981) have investigated the characteristics of curricula. The Peterson and Connolly study was the first attempt to systematically and comprehensively describe curriculum content in professional preparation programs. Findings from this study caused the investigators to note a continuing need for the organization and quality control of curriculum content and design.

Skalko and Smith (1989) reported from their investigation the need for more progress toward therapeutic recreation professionalization. Results suggested a lack of standardization in professional titles, employment criteria, and credentials. Skalko and Smith noted “continued movement toward standardized curricula may further advance the field” (p. 46).

A theme apparent in research conducted during the 1990s (Austin & Hamilton, 1992; Compton & Austin, 1994/95) has been the viability of therapeutic recreation curricula in higher education. These researchers reported a number of strategies to promote therapeutic recreation programs on campus and to maintain curricula in the future during periods of financial exigency.

A recently completed study (Kinney & Witman, 1996) recommended the organization of the therapeutic recreation curricula according to seven content areas, each having delineated competencies and recommended course titles. These standards were conceptualized as targets of excellence to use in curriculum evaluation and self-assessment guidelines central to career-long learning. These stemmed from the concern about the lack of curriculum standardization in the field.

Entry-Level Knowledge and Educational Accreditation

A second line of research has been the identification of entry-level knowledge and the relationship of professional preparation to therapeutic recreation professionalization. Federally funded projects in the early 1970s focused on the identification of competencies for the preparation of therapeutic recreation specialists at various academic levels. Outcomes of a joint project between the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped and the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (1973) and a University of Illinois based project (Kelly, Robb, Park, & Halberg, 1976) were competency-based master's and associate's level curricula, respectively. As one outcome of these early studies and grant projects, statements were incorporated into the therapeutic recreation specialization at the undergraduate level; the first specialization to be recognized by the NRPA/AALR Council on Accreditation (cf. NRPA, 1975, 1977).

The Peterson and Connolly (1981) study, which researched curriculum content in professional preparation programs, called for better organization and quality control of therapeutic recreation curricula. An outgrowth of the project was the identification of 12 content areas and 81 competency statements. Revision of the accreditation standards reported in 1981 (NRPA, 1981) expanded the previous statements from 12 to 24 to define a curriculum option in therapeutic recreation.

Stumbo (1986) completed a study to identify, refine, and validate the knowledge base
required by entry-level practitioners to deliver services. The researcher recommended a re-examination of the accreditation standards to consider 37 entry-level content areas reported in the investigation results. When the accreditation standards were revisited in the late 1980s, the revised therapeutic recreation option (NRPA, 1990) identified 4 foundational and 22 option statements incorporating the content areas reported in the Stumbo (1986) investigation.

The job analysis research conducted for the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (Oltman, Norback, & Rosenfeld, 1989) found high levels of agreement on professional responsibilities and knowledge areas of practicing professionals. A core body of knowledge areas and job tasks established and documented job-relatedness and content validity of the certification examination.

The intent of a study conducted by McGhee (1987) was to develop an educational profile for the acquisition of therapeutic recreation competencies from professional preparation through continuing education. Study respondents were unable to clearly identify the most appropriate educational experiences for acquiring specific competencies.

Witman and Shank (1987) investigated the progress of therapeutic recreation to professionalize. Study recommendations supported curricular revision and refinement with practitioner input and a stronger blending of theoretical and practical knowledge.

As a preliminary investigation to the updating of the job analysis by NCTRC, Connolly and Riley (1995/96) investigated the actual skills used in entry-level therapeutic recreation practice by NCTRC certificant renewals in their first two years of practice. Study results indicated the nine job dimensions of the initial job analysis study continued to be representative of entry-level practice. The researchers concluded that the assumed linkage between the initial job analysis and knowledge areas remained valid and relevant to current curricular practices.

One conclusion from a review of the above studies is that there is more consensus on the definition of entry-level knowledge than there is in the “package” (curricula) to deliver it. While the profession generally agrees on what constitutes the boundaries of the field in terms of practice, there is little agreement on curriculum design and content. Unfortunately, this state of affairs, as reported in the research literature, has been left in a disarray for over two decades.

In summary, therapeutic recreation curricula have been in the process of development since the late 1940s with master’s curriculum outlined in 1961 (Comeback, Inc., 1961) and undergraduate content proposed in 1963 (MacLean, 1963). Researchers have conducted curriculum studies (Anderson & Stewart, 1980; Martin, 1971; Stein, 1970; Stewart & Anderson, 1990), investigated the relationship of professional preparation to the professionalization process (Connolly & Riley, 1995/96; McGhee, 1987; Oltman, Norback, & Rosenfeld, 1989; Skalko & Smith, 1989; Stumbo, 1986; Witman & Shank, 1987), explored curriculum competencies and content (AAHPER, 1973; Anderson & Leitner, 1978; Brasile, 1992; Kelley, Robb, Park, & Halberg, 1976; Kinney & Witman, 1996; Lindley, 1970; Peterson & Connolly, 1981; Smith, 1976), and analyzed the status and future of curricula in view of existing financial exigencies (Austin & Hamilton, 1992; Compton & Austin, 1994/95). However, there is little agreement on curricular design and content. Carter and Folkther (1997) most recently noted “curriculum development in therapeutic recreation is sporadic and unsystematic” (p. 265).

The intent of this study was to examine the specific characteristics of existing therapeutic recreation curricula across the country. The analysis presented in this paper focused on accreditation, curricular, and internship characteristics.

Methods

The authors designed an instrument specific to the purpose of this study. The major factors taken into consideration in the design
included prior curriculum studies by Stumbo and Peterson (1987), Stewart and Anderson (1990) and other authors; NRPA/AALR accreditation standards; NCTRC standards; and NTRS fieldwork standards. These sources provided guidelines for developing the seven sections of the survey, which included items on the characteristics of the: (a) unit, (b) faculty, (c) accreditation status, (d) students, (e) curriculum and course offerings, (f) internship requirements, and (g) graduation and placement rates. The present analysis focused primarily on the results from the sections on accreditation, curriculum, and internship requirements, with some information describing the sample in terms of unit structure, and faculty and students.

Instrument Development

The initial survey received three separate reviews or pilot studies. The first was conducted at a research session of a national conference in the fall of 1995. At this session, copies of the preliminary draft were distributed to the audience of approximately 30 researchers, and feedback concerning the content and item format was collected for the purpose of revising the survey. The second review involved approximately 30 undergraduate students enrolled in a research/evaluation course in the fall of 1995. These students were asked to review the document for both content and item format. Following this procedure, the survey was revised a second time. The third review involved a national pilot study of 20 therapeutic recreation professionals who volunteered to review the tool. These individuals were asked to follow the procedure to complete the survey to determine both quality of the instrument and length of time to completion. The instrument was refined a final time following the pilot study, and consisted of 75 questions on 8 pages with an accompanying cover letter.

Sample Selection

A list of 149 institutions purporting to offer 4-year therapeutic recreation curricula was compiled from lists provided by the American Therapeutic Recreation Association, the National Therapeutic Recreation Society, the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification, and the NRPA/AALR Council on Accreditation. A cover letter explaining how to complete the survey and the survey were sent to the individual identified as the Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator at each institution.

Return Rate

An initial mailing and three follow-up mailings (postcard, telephone reminder, and second survey mailing) produced 128 responses, for a total return rate of 85.91%. Fourteen of these responding institutions were dropped from the sample because of unusable data. The final sample consisted of 114 institutions, for a usable return rate of 76.51%.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included using the SPSS program to analyze closed-ended, quantitative information, and content analysis to code open-ended, qualitative data. Most of the data in the five sections reported in this article were analyzed and reported as grouped data. A number of institutions did not respond to all items, resulting in several points of missing data. The total number of respondents per item is noted when the number of respondents deviates from the total sample of 114.

Results

The results are reported by the five sections of the survey described in this article. These sections include characteristics of the: (a) unit, (b) faculty and students, (c) accreditation status, (d) curriculum and course offerings, and (e) internship requirements. Each of these will be discussed individually.

Unit Characteristics

Ninety (78.95%) of the 114 responding institutions were public and 24 (22.05%) were
private. The majority of the responding institutions reported considering therapeutic recreation as an option or sequence (85 or 74.56%), while 27 (23.68%) had a major or degree. The range of reported (n = 83) enrolled undergraduates was from 400 to 42,000, with a mean of 11,156 and a mode of 10,000. The range of reported (n = 62) enrolled graduate students was from 35 to 11,000 with a mean of 3,182 and a mode of 5,000.

Of the 110 respondents to the question about title of the college in which they were housed, 31 (28.18%) were from a college or school of education and an additional 16 (14.55%) were from a blended college or school of education. Thirty-one (28.18%) were housed in a college or school of health, physical education and recreation, or health and human services. Seventeen (15.45%) were housed in a college or school of social science, nursing, allied health, or professional studies. The remaining 15 (13.64%) were from unique units such as applied science and technology, agriculture food and natural resources, public programs, and human ecology.

One hundred thirteen responded to the question about department title, revealing a split between two major types of departments. The largest group was from a department of recreation and leisure studies (56 or 49.56%); closely followed by a department of health, physical education and recreation (and dance) with 50 (44.25%). Only 2 (1.77%) departments were titled therapeutic recreation, and the remaining 5 (4.42%) varied (for example, continuing education, special services, and human services and studies).

Respondents also were questioned about the title of the degree, sequence, option, or emphasis. Of the 107 respondents, 102 (95.33%) labeled their degree, major, sequence, or option “therapeutic recreation,” while 4 (3.74%) were labeled “recreation therapy,” and 1 (.93%) was “leisure and special populations/TR.” The overwhelming majority were labeled as “therapeutic recreation.”

What appears from these three sets of data is that consensus on titles becomes stronger, the closer one gets to the actual degree program. College titles were widely varied, department titles less so, and degree or sequence titles very much less so. “Therapeutic recreation” is the most preferred term for the degree or sequence, typically housed in a department of recreation/leisure studies or HPER(D), within a diversity of college units (although most were a college of education or health, physical education and recreation (and dance).

Faculty and Student Characteristics

The average number of total recreation and leisure faculty was 4.43, with a mode of 3, and a range from 1 to 20. Of those, the average number of therapeutic recreation faculty was 1.72, with a mode of 1, and a range from 1 to 5. The most frequent size of recreation unit was 3 total faculty, 1 of whom was a therapeutic recreation faculty member.

Per institution (n = 106), the average number of undergraduate recreation and leisure studies major was 135.74, with a mode of 150, and a range of 15 to 433. With 57 institutions reporting, the total number of recreation and leisure studies graduate students averaged 21.87, with a mode of 30, and a range of 2 to 73. The average number of undergraduate therapeutic recreation majors (n = 112) was 50.65, with a mode of 30, and a range from 4 to 180. Therapeutic recreation graduate student numbers (n = 45) averaged 10.49, with a mode of 2 and a range of 1 to 55. Undergraduate therapeutic recreation majors (n = 113) were increasing for the majority of schools (68 or 60.18%), and graduate therapeutic recreation enrollment (n = 51) was stable (21 or 41.18%) or increasing (19 or 37.25%) for most of the schools.

Accreditation Characteristics

Respondents also were asked for information about status and future with the NRPA/AALR accreditation program. One hundred nine schools responded; 66 that were accredited and 43 that were not. Of the 66 accredited
schools, 63 (95.45%) of the respondents had their core curriculum accredited, while 23 (34.85%) had other options and 41 (62.12%) had the therapeutic recreation option accredited. Most initial accreditation activity had been fairly recent, with the average institution being accredited in 1985, and the mode being accredited in 1990. Of the 66 institutions responding to the question, 64 (96.97%) felt they would seek re-accreditation.

Of those that were accredited, reasons given for maintaining accreditation status were that it: (a) provides an indication of quality (62 or 93.94%), (b) supports the mission of improving curriculum across university (52 or 78.79%), (c) helps in recruiting potential students (49 or 74.24%), (d) provides a competitive edge over similar departments across the state or region (47 or 71.21%), and (e) supports the mission of improving curriculum across the country (41 or 62.12%). Accreditation costs are most often paid by the college or school (41 or 62.12%) followed by the university (31 or 46.97%), or the department (30 or 45.45%). Percentages equal more than 100% as many schools selected more than one answer.

Of those few who planned to not seek re-accreditation, reasons cited included: (a) a lack of funding (4 or 6.06%), (b) being able to provide quality without re-accreditation (3 or 4.55%), and (c) accreditation not being valued by the university (2 or 3.03%). No institution responded that they were not seeking re-accreditation because they no longer met the standards.

Of those that were not currently accredited, but planned to seek accreditation within the next 5 years, 28 (62.12%) reported wanting to accredit the core and 17 (39.53%) wanted to accredit therapeutic recreation. Only 6 (13.95%) reported wanting to accredit other options besides therapeutic recreation. Of those not accredited and not wanting to seek accreditation, the most popular reasons were that: (a) quality can be provided without accreditation (11 or 25.5%), (b) accreditation was not valued or recognized by university (7 or 16.28%), and faculty did not have time or resources to complete the required self-study (5 or 11.63%).

**Curriculum Characteristics**

The first question in the section on curriculum and course offerings asked about the rationale behind the initiation and revision of the therapeutic recreation curriculum. The respondents were asked about a series of reasons for both initiation and revision that they then rated on a four-point Likert scale (1 = very important to 4 = not important). For curriculum initiation, the top four reasons were: (a) input from professionals/practitioners (mean of 1.92), (b) faculty skills and preferences (mean of 2.08), (c) input from colleagues at other universities (2.38), and (d) NCTRC certification standards (2.41). For curriculum revision, the top four rated reasons were: (a) NCTRC certification standards (1.20), (b) input from professionals/practitioners (1.69), NRPA/AALR accreditation standards (1.81), and faculty skills and preferences (2.08). Table 1 displays the data from this question. In curriculum revision, NCTRC and NRPA/AALR Council on Accreditation standards showed greater prominence than in curriculum initiation. Having the least impact at either initiation or revision were NTRS field placement standards, student skills and preferences, and federal grants/studies.

Several universities had undergone recent changes in their therapeutic recreation curriculum, with the mean year of change in 1994, the mode in 1995, and the range spanning 1985 to 1996. These data may reflect the recent changes in NCTRC standards that impacted therapeutic recreation curricula, as can be noted from the responses to the previous question.

Each institution also was asked about the number of hours required in the therapeutic recreation major. The responses had a high degree of fluctuation. The average number of hours required for graduation was 129.76, of which an average of 50.44 hours were consumed by general education requirements.
Table 1.

Influences on Developing and Revising Therapeutic Recreation Curricula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Curriculum Initiation</th>
<th>Curriculum Revision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCTRC Certification Standards</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input from Practitioners</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPA/AALR Accreditation Standards</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Skills and Preferences</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input from Colleagues at Other Universities</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTRS Field Placement Standards</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Skills and Preferences</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Grants/Studies</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = total number of institutions responding to question.
1 = very important to 4 = not important.

Within the degree program, core course work required an average of 32.72 hours, supporting course work required 23.69 hours, and therapeutic recreation course work required 18.73 hours. Table 2 displays data from this question. A range of 91 to 104 institutions responded to these five questions.

Regarding supporting course work for undergraduate therapeutic recreation majors, institutions were asked the number of hours required in related disciplines. The top supporting areas ranked by average number of credit hours required at a minimum of 30 institutions were: psychology/counseling (9.06 credit hours), exercise physiology/anatomy (6.55 credit hours), and health education (3.97 credit hours).

The changes within the therapeutic recreation curriculum anticipated within the next 5 years included: (a) more therapeutic recreation courses being added (45 or 39.47%), (b) more assignments/requirements being required in therapeutic recreation courses (44 or 38.60%), (c) more requirements in the therapeutic recreation internship (26 or 22.81%), and (d) more supporting course work being added (22

Table 2.

Required Credit Hours for Graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Hours for Graduation</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>129.76</td>
<td>128.0</td>
<td>90 to 192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education/Universities</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>50.44</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>15 to 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Coursework</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>23.70</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>3 to 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation/Leisure Coursework</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>32.72</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>3 to 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Recreation Coursework</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>18.73</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9 to 44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = total number of institutions responding to question.

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Curriculum Analysis

Faculty were asked to report the number and titles of required and elective undergraduate therapeutic recreation courses. These courses were analyzed in two ways: (a) by number of required and elective courses, and (b) content of course titles. The first analysis consisted of grouping university and college curriculum according to the number of required and elective courses. One hundred five institutions responded to this question.

Table 3 provides a matrix of the number of institutions within a required/elective course framework. For example, there were 2 schools that required 1 therapeutic recreation course and 2 therapeutic recreation electives. There were 20 schools that required 3 therapeutic recreation courses but offered no elective therapeutic recreation courses. While the table shows great curriculum diversity in terms of required and elective therapeutic recreation course work, the most consistency exists between those schools requiring 3, 4, and 5 therapeutic recreation classes, with no electives in therapeutic recreation content.

The second analysis identified the content of course titles using an adapted version of the NCTRC framework for content courses. Curricula were analyzed by course title and whether the course was required or an elective. Again, 105 institutions responded to this question. Table 4 displays the data focusing on course titles. The following narrative combines these two analyses, and explains the similarities and differences among curricular offerings in universities across the country.

One or Two Required Courses. Ten schools had 2 or less required TR courses and 3 or less elective courses. Nine of these 10 offered an introduction to TR course that was required. Six offered specific disability courses, with all but 2 of these being elective. Five offered a principles and practices course, 3 required it. Four offered TR program planning, 2 of which were required and 2 of which were elective. Four offered an issues course, with all being elective. Only 1 school of the 10 offered leisure education, and it was offered as an elective; the same is true of the area of assessment and documentation. No school offered a management course. At least 10 curricula appeared to not meet NCTRC standards of a minimum of 3 content courses in therapeut-
Table 4.  
Institutional Therapeutic Recreation Required and Elective Offerings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TR Course Offerings/Titles</th>
<th>Number of Required Therapeutic Recreation Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (n = 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to TR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR Prog. Planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of TR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability/Specialty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment/Documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues in TR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management in TR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = total number of institutions.  
R = number of institutions requiring course.  
E = number of institutions with course as elective.  
Total n = 105 institutions.

Therapeutic recreation offered for student enrollment.

Three Required Courses. Thirty schools reported requiring 3 TR courses; 20 with no electives, 7 with 1 elective, 2 with 2 electives, and 1 with 3 electives. Of the 20 with no electives, 18 required introduction to TR. Eleven offered a principles and practices course, and all required it. Nine offered a program planning course, and all 9 were required. Eight had at least one specific disabilities course, and all 8 required this course. Three offered issues classes, all were required. Only one offered a leisure education course, 1 offered as assessment/documentation course, and 1 offered a management course.

Of the 10 with electives, 9 required an introduction to TR course. Seven offered a
principles and practices course, and 5 required it. Five offered at least 1 special disabilities course, 3 required students to take it. Two schools required program planning. Three schools offered issues courses (electives), 3 schools offered leisure education (1 required, 2 as electives), 1 offered a management class (required), and none offered an assessment/documentation class.

Four Required Courses. Twenty-two schools reported requiring four TR courses: 20 with no electives, 1 with 1 elective, and 1 with 2 electives. Of the 20 with no electives, 16 had a required introduction to TR, 14 required TR program planning, 13 required a principles and practices class, and 10 required a specific disability course. Seven required an issues course. Six required specific courses on assessment, 3 required a course on management, and 2 required a leisure education course.

Of the 2 with electives, both required introduction to TR and issues in TR, and both offered an aging course as an elective. Both offered a principles and procedures course, and 1 required it. One required a program planning class, and 1 required an assessment/documentation course. Neither offered a leisure education or management course.

Five Required Courses. Twenty-two schools reported requiring 5 TR courses: 15 with no electives, 4 with 1 elective, 2 with 2 electives, and 1 with 3 electives. Of the 15 with no electives, 13 required a principles and practices course, 11 required introduction to TR, 9 required a specific disability course, and 7 required program planning. Five required a leisure education course, 5 required an issues in TR course, 3 required an assessment course, and 3 required a management course.

Of the 7 with electives, 6 required an introduction class, 6 required a specific disabilities course, 5 required a principles and practices course, 4 required a program planning course, 3 required a management course, 3 offered a leisure education course (2 as electives), 2 required issues, and 2 required assessment/documentation. Electives were most often additional disabilities courses (e.g., aging) or activity courses (e.g., adventure-based or animal-facilitated therapy).

Six Required Courses. Ten schools required 6 courses; 4 with no electives, 5 with 1 elective, and 1 with 3 electives. Of the 4 with no electives, all 4 required a program planning class and a principles and practices class, 3 required introduction to TR, and 3 required a specific disability course. Two each required an issues in TR class, a management class, and a leisure education class. Only 1 school offered an assessment/documentation class.

Of the 6 with 1 or 2 electives, 5 required introduction to TR, 6 required a specific disability course (4 offered several populations courses, 1 of which offered 7 specific disability courses), 4 required a principles and practices course, 3 required an issues in TR course, and 3 required a management course, 2 required a program planning course, and 1 offered leisure education as an elective. None offered an assessment/documentation course.

Seven or More Required Courses. Eleven schools required 7 or more courses, and ranged from 7 required courses and no electives to 11 required courses and 6 electives. All 11 of these institutions are grouped, although their diversity made analysis difficult. Ten of these institutions required specific disability courses (7 of which offered multiple courses on disability groups, 1 institution offered 6 disability courses). Nine schools required a principles and practices course, 8 required a program planning course, 7 required a leisure education course, 6 required an assessment/documentation course, 6 required an issues course, and 3 offered a management course (1 as an elective).

Although analysis was made difficult by the diversity of curricula, the following observations were made:

- A few institutions, even though they claimed to have a degree/sequence in therapeutic recreation, did not meet the NCTRC standards for therapeutic recreation course work (three required therapeutic recreation content courses).
• The most common course offered (and always required where offered) was introduction to therapeutic recreation.

• The second most common course was principles and practices of therapeutic recreation, especially for those institutions with 2, 3, 6, or 7 required courses.

• The third most common course was program planning, although it was less a priority at schools with 5 or 6 required classes.

• The least frequently mentioned courses were leisure education, management in therapeutic recreation, and assessment and documentation, although these were more popular for curricula that had from 5 to 7 required courses.

• The greater the number of required therapeutic recreation courses, the more likely the schools were to have courses (sometimes as many as 7) that focused on disability-related information.

• There was very little uniformity in course offerings, although those universities offering 3, 4, and 5 required courses seemed to be the most parallel.

**Internship Characteristics**

Internship requirements was another area of wide fluctuation between universities. When asked how many formal internships were required of majors, the average of responses was 1.74, with the mode being 1. However, the range for this question was 1 to 9. In terms of number of weeks required for senior internship, the average was 12.60 weeks, with a mode of 10, and a range from 10 to 32. Similarly, when asked about total hours required within the senior internship, the average was 469.63, with a mode of 400, and a range from 90 to 640 hours.

The vast majority of institutions required the agency supervisor to be NCTRC certified (107 or 93.86%), but only 54 (47.37%) required the university supervisor to be nationally certified.

Schools reviewed a variety of qualifications for approving senior internship sites for therapeutic recreation majors. Of the 109 institutions reporting an approval system, 100 (91.74%) required the agency to employ staff members who were CTRS, 73 (66.97%) required documentation such as an internship manual, 45 (41.28%) required a visit and subsequent approval from the therapeutic recreation faculty, and 38 (34.86%) required an approval form showing adherence to NCTRC standards.

Most schools (93 or 81.58%) put no geographic limit to internship sites. Only 7 (6.14%) instituted mile limits (averaging 153.86 miles), and 4 (3.51%) required students to stay within the state. While the majority (99 or 86.84%) never had the student pay for internship supervision travel, 3 (2.63%) had the student pay all expenses, and 5 (4.39%) had them pay part of the travel expenses.

At 92 (80.70%) of the institutions, internship supervision was considered part of the faculty load. With regard to faculty load credit, 48 (42.11%) schools had 1 faculty supervise all interns regardless of the number per semester, 24 (21.05%) specified a certain number of students per .25 FTE load, and at 11 (9.65%) institutions, each faculty supervised a certain number of interns per semester. At 100 (87.72%) of the schools, students were allowed to complete internships during the summer months. Grading systems for internship included standard A/B/C/D/F grading at 74 (64.91%) universities and a pass/fail grading system at 38 (33.33%) schools. Only 42 (38.84%) of the programs allowed students to take other course work while completing the senior internship.

**Conclusions**

Therapeutic recreation curricula were located at universities that varied widely. They tended to be smaller institutions, with an average of 11,156 undergraduates and 3,182 graduate students. The home departments were most likely to be housed in a college or school of education; education and human ser-
vices (47 or 41.22%); or health, physical education and recreation (31 or 28.18%). The two most prevalent department name categories were (a) recreation and leisure studies (56 or 49.56%); and (b) health, physical education and recreation (50 or 44.25%). The overwhelming majority called their degree or sequence "therapeutic recreation" (102 or 95.33%).

Most recreation and leisure units were relatively small. The average number of total recreation faculty was 4.43, therapeutic recreation faculty at 1.72, undergraduate recreation majors at 135.74, and undergraduate therapeutic recreation majors at 50.65.

Of the 66 institutions reporting accreditation status, most (64 or 96.97%) stated they intended to seek re-accreditation, largely due to its indication as a quality department/program (62 or 93.94%), and supporting the mission of improving curriculum within the university (52 or 78.79%).

Therapeutic recreation curricula were very diverse among the responding institutions. There was a range of between 1 to 7 required courses, and 1 to 6 elective therapeutic recreation courses. The most common configurations were 3, 4, and 5 required courses, with no electives. The most common courses offered were introduction to therapeutic recreation, principles and practices of therapeutic recreation, and therapeutic recreation program planning. The least offered courses were leisure education, management in therapeutic recreation, and assessment and documentation. Those that required 3, 4, or 5 therapeutic recreation courses were the most parallel in terms of requirements.

The average internship length was 12.60 weeks, with 10 weeks being the most common requirement. Most universities required the agency supervisor to be NCTRC certified (107 or 93.86%), but only 54 (or 47.37%) required the university supervisor be NCTRC certified (107 or 93.86%), but only 54 (47.37%) required the university supervisor be NCTRC certified. One hundred (91.74%) of the reporting schools required some type of agency approval system in order to receive senior interns. Most schools (93 or 81.58%) did not impose geographic limits for internship site selection, nor require the student to pay supervisor travel expenses (99 or 86.84%).

Recommendations

State-of-the-art curriculum studies often do not lend themselves to easily provide recommendations based on the data. Often, statistics reported are not within the jurisdiction of therapeutic recreation faculty (for example, college in which they are housed). However, some suggestions are provided because it appears that the state-of-the-art for therapeutic recreation curricula is less than stellar.

First, therapeutic recreation degrees or sequences are largely housed in one of two types of colleges (colleges of education or education and human services, and colleges of health, physical education and recreation); and one of two types of departments (departments of recreation/leisure studies and departments of health, physical education and recreation). It is recommended that a further study be conducted to determine the impact of these administrative locations on therapeutic recreation faculty and curricula.

Second, slightly over one half of the institutions reported being accredited by the NRPA/AALR Council on Accreditation (COA). These institutions reported in strong numbers that accreditation provided an indication of quality, helped support the mission of the university, and helped recruit students. Those schools that were not accredited most often reported that quality could be attained without accreditation and that it was not supported by the university. It appears that those programs which are accredited received support to do so by the university and those that are not accredited did not receive support. While many institutional policies are steadfast, it is recommended that COA begin a marketing program to the administration of those universities that house non-accredited recreation/therapeutic recreation departments/programs. Before creating a marketing program, it
may be beneficial for the COA to conduct further research into the nature and characteristics of these universities.

Third, the data showed therapeutic recreation curricula were extremely diverse. In this study, curricula were analyzed through course titles, and required and elective status. One recommendation from the findings is for more in-depth research to be conducted on the content of the courses, beyond course titles. The diversity of offerings suggests that commonality within course titles may not be assumed. More information is needed here. A second recommendation from this study is that, after more thorough research is completed, a national movement for consensus on curriculum design and internship requirements be initiated by one of the national membership or credentialing organizations (National Therapeutic Recreation Society, American Therapeutic Recreation Association, and/or the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification). It is believed that no 2 of the 114 reporting institutions were identical in their therapeutic recreation course titles/offering. The lack of uniformity is a cause for concern, if not alarm. If there is no standardization of curricula, then it follows that there is no or little standardization of the degree or "exit skills" for graduates.

Fourth, a similar concern exists about those institutions that are not complying with NCTRC internship requirements. Six percent of the schools do not require the agency internship supervisor to be NCTRC certified, which means that the students graduating from those programs are not eligible to sit for the NCTRC exam. In addition, at least 10 institutions did not have the required number (3) of therapeutic recreation courses by NCTRC standards. If not irresponsible and unethical, minimally, it places students at risk for future employment opportunities. It is recommended that the national organizations previously mentioned work more diligently to assist departments/programs that have sub-standard curricula.

Lastly, in-depth research that provides a national view of therapeutic recreation curricula needs to be conducted every 5 to 10 years. Tracking trends is important both for setting and maintaining national standards. Research, such as the present study, provides information that is not available from any other means, and yet so richly describes the current state of affairs. Since higher education is the cornerstone of many professional issues and efforts, it is imperative to track its ever-changing status.

References


Comeback, Inc. (1961). Therapeutic recreation


