

**The American Occupational Therapy Association
Report to the Executive Board**

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TO: AOTA Board of Directors

SUBJECT: Request for Board Action

TOPIC: Development of Rehabilitation Science

Executive Summary:

A workgroup was formed at the request of AOTA President Dr. Carolyn Baum to address the following objective: Determine how we build the profession's cadre of scientists to access NIH and NIDRR funding. Because the research training issues are essentially the same and to include a broader range of research funding opportunities, we broadened the statement of the objective to include access to federal funding (vs. NIH and NIDRR funding).

Nineteen (19) specific action items were generated through telephone and e-mail discussion. The Ad Hoc Committee reached a consensus on prioritizing three of these items and consolidating them under the overall goal of having AOTA prioritize and fulfill its mission in regard to research. This requires AOTA to revisit the position of research in its mission and to develop, in collaboration with other stakeholders, strategic planning that supports a culture of research.

Action Items:

1. Target substantive AOTA dollars to support seed research projects and to support research training.
2. Educate novice (new) doctoral-level researchers in grantsmanship
3. Market (feature) 'research' in AOTA publications and at conference

Relation to Strategic Plan: This Ad Hoc Committee on the Development of Rehabilitation Science directly relates to Goal III of the Revised Strategic Plan (2-21-05) "To foster the discovery, integration, application, and dissemination of occupational therapy knowledge to advance practice, education, and research." More specifically, it relates to Section A of Goal III:

“Advocate for federal and foundation training and research funds and/or the opportunities to support the development of scientists and scientific knowledge to advance the profession.”

Fiscal Implications (Indicate who prepared the projections):

To be completed pending Board deliberation.

Full Report:

Statement of the Problem:

- (1) Insufficient numbers of occupational therapy (OT) scientists in research-extensive and -intensive universities are applying for and receiving federal funding to develop the science of occupational therapy.
- (2) A significant number of OT scientists, who are recipients of federal research funds, will be retiring over the next decade.
- (3) The number of research-prepared OT faculty in the pipeline is insufficient to fill the need for OT scientists.
- (4) Given the dearth of research-prepared OT faculty, some OT programs in research-extensive and -intensive universities are at-risk for being terminated.

Background Information:

There is a dearth of information about research funding received by OT faculties and by occupational therapists in other research/professional positions. Baseline data on OT faculty collected in the 1980s suggested that few had competitive grants (Parham, 1985a, b). Almost two decades later, a similar survey documented a trend toward increased extramural funding (Paul, Liu, & Ottenbacher, 2002). More recent data, obtained through department chairs/directors, identified 42 NIH, 5 CDC, and 16 NIDRR research/research training grants with OT faculty as named investigators (AOTA, 2004). In a companion survey, knowledge of NIH mechanisms, including predoctoral and postdoctoral funding, was unanimously listed as the “greatest need” (AOTA, 2005). The available information is limited by a) low response rates, b) different questions being examined in each study, c) failure to examine faculty subgroups, and, d) failure to differentiate research/research training grants from other types of grants. Hence, not only do we have extremely limited background information, the available information does not permit us to know our baseline research capacity in terms of funding. However, we do have reason to believe that over the past 20 years more research conducted by OT faculties has been federally funded.

Implications for the Profession: Research funding is needed to

- develop biopsychosocial science knowledge about processes and outcomes of daily life activities and occupational performance as related to quality of life and health
- evaluate current occupational therapy interventions and practices
- develop innovative occupational therapy interventions and practices
- attain promotion and tenure in research extensive/intensive universities
- (achieve)/maintain professional status

Consequently, unless research funding is obtained, we are concerned that many of our clients will undergo untested interventions, our practitioners will not have the necessary data to justify their interventions and hence reimbursement will be compromised, our science will fail to keep pace, and our faculty will have higher turnover rates because of failure to meet promotion/tenure requirements.

Recommendations Considered (explain thinking behind each recommendation and alternative: describe why the final recommendation was chosen).

Our primary solution and recommendations

Problem	Solution	Recommended Action
<p>Insufficient numbers of occupational therapy (OT) scientists in research-extensive and intensive universities have the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to compete successfully for federal research dollars.</p>	<p>The mission statement of the AOTA: “The American Occupational Therapy Association advances the quality, availability, use, and support of occupational therapy through standard-setting, advocacy, education, and research on behalf of its members and the public.”</p> <p>The solution to the problem is for the AOTA to fulfill its mission in regard to research.</p> <p>This solution was</p>	<p>1. Target substantive AOTA dollars to</p> <p>1.a. support seed research projects, that are tied to larger research projects, thus providing needed logistic and social support</p> <p>1.b. support research training, for example, supplementing post-doctoral training grants to provide financial incentive for advanced research training</p> <p>Funds should be channeled to those programs and those individuals who have the best capability of yielding the desired product (e.g., faculty in research-extensive/intensive universities versus other Carnegie Classifications, matching a federally-funded scientist with a “federally funded-wanna bes” for mentoring).</p> <p>2. Educate novice doctoral-level researchers in grantsmanship (e.g., conduct a grant-funded conference, pairing successful grantees with aspiring grantees, aimed at yielding a federal research application (Career Award, R03, R01, Field-initiated, as appropriate). Mentoring should include developing a long-term research program, where one grant logically leads to the next, versus just getting a grant. The conference could be modeled after the AOTF-sponsored grant</p>

Problem	Solution	Recommended Action
	chosen because it is a pre-requisite to all actions.	workshops, which were held in major universities and involved faculty from related disciplines who had been successful in writing federal research grants and granting agency representatives. 3. Market (feature) “research” in AOTA publications and at annual conference (e.g., feature success stories, follow a research presentation with a critique of the presentation indicating its strengths and weaknesses, conduct a mentored poster session where a research expert goes from poster to poster explaining its design and outcomes. Importantly, inform health policymakers and consumers of relevant and useful OT research by disseminating research findings in jargon-free, understandable, and scientifically-sound language.

“Other” solutions and recommendations considered

A. Potential recommendations to **stimulate a culture of research**

Recommendation	Resources Needed
Increase awareness of the research conducted by occupational therapist through user friendly articles in XXXXX.	
Increase awareness of research career opportunities through XXXXX.	
Target (e.g., inform them) occupational therapists in PhD programs for information on research careers.	
Review federal research priorities and inform OTs of those that are compatible with OT (e.g., “productive activity” fits under complementary/alternative medicine).	
Increase the visibility of research/research training at conference (e.g., invite representatives from federal agencies to give informational meetings and to meet with attendees).	
Increase OT program directors’ knowledge of the differential needs (e.g. dedicated time for research) of faculty who want to become career scientists.	

B. Potential recommendations to **increase the number of occupational therapists receiving federal (NIH, NIDRR, OSERS, CDC, etc.) research training and research funds**

Recommendation	Resources Needed
Position occupational therapists as program/project directors at federal agencies (e.g., NCMRR).	
Seek funds to support a capacity-building workshop modeled after that	

Recommendation	Resources Needed
conducted by the Association of Academic Physiatrists.	
Partner with other agencies/foundations (e.g., Hartford) to obtain funds for research training.	
Target PhDs/ScDs-to-be (early career scientists) for a career development program (e.g., inform them of career award opportunities).	
Market/lobby agencies to establish research priorities that are more in line with OT priorities.	
Raise funds for seed projects, research training, etc.	
Provide seed funds for research to jump start (would include plans for research broader than the pilot research).	
Implement a research training conference (e.g., attendees come with first drafts of a proposal, receive needed assistance from senior mentors).	
Implement one (senior researcher)-on-one (junior researcher) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mentors within OT. • mentors in disciplines related to OT. 	
Because our workforce is primarily women, there is often a reduced ability to relocate to obtain research positions. This needs to be taken into account in planning.	

Resources Needed

To be completed pending Board deliberation.

References

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