



## CoARC Position Statement on Respiratory Care Education

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The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented growth in Respiratory Care, both in terms of awareness of the profession and workforce demand. Meeting the increased workforce demand will require a multi-pronged approach. As the leader in advancing respiratory care education and the quality of Respiratory Care educational programs, the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) strives to ensure that its Accreditation Standards and Policies reflect both the current and future state of the profession. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in an effort to facilitate the continued availability of new graduates to meet workforce needs, the CoARC has allowed accredited programs to make adjustments to their curricula that maintained the health, safety and security of students, faculty and patients while ensuring that programs continued to meet CoARC's mandated outcomes.

Several years ago, the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) established a goal for the Respiratory Care profession, namely that by 2030 all accredited entry into practice programs would need to award program graduates a baccalaureate degree.<sup>1</sup> There are many valid reasons for this goal, and the CoARC recognizes the importance of progress in education for advancement of the profession. However, the number of accredited entry into practice programs at the baccalaureate level has decreased since 2018. In addition, the total numbers of applications, enrollments, and graduates from CoARC accredited programs have declined for several years, as has the total number of accredited programs (443 in 2017 to 416 in 2020).<sup>2</sup>

The CoARC wants to boost growth in the numbers of both accredited entry into practice programs and graduates to address local and national workforce needs, and to encourage the educational advancement of the Respiratory Care profession. To that end, CoARC has amended Standard 1.01 and will accredit new and existing programs at the associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degree levels, as long as they meet the Accreditation Standards for Entry into Practice. In addition, to facilitate educational advancement and professional development, CoARC strongly encourages entry into practice programs at the associate degree level to develop pathways, agreements, and/or contracts with degree advancement programs. The CoARC believes these actions will address both the market workforce requirements and the AARC's vision for the future of the Respiratory Care profession.

For questions regarding this communication, please contact Tom Smalling, Chief Executive Officer of the CoARC, at 817-283-2835 or by email at [tom@coarc.com](mailto:tom@coarc.com).

1. <https://www.aarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/issue-paper-entry-to-respiratory-therapy-practice-2030.pdf>
2. <https://coarc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020-CoARC-Report-on-Accreditation-4.29.21.pdf>