Greetings from NCTRC!

While the mainstream work of the Council remains the protection of the public through the offering of a quality credentialing program, many opportunities still exist for NCTRC to branch out and promote the benefits of recreation therapy and to explore methods to improve services to its CTRS constituents. In an effort to capitalize on such opportunities, the Council has embarked on an aggressive campaign to increase resource allocations in three major operational areas: Research, Marketing and Customer Service. NCTRC has a focused approach to increase the number of CTRS certificants by expanding the opportunities for recreation therapy employment and improving credentialing services to its customer base.

Allow me to share some developments from each area:

Research: During the past year NCTRC established a comprehensive research agenda to assist the Board of Directors in making informed and effective decisions about NCTRC standards and operations. Significant achievements in this area have been the completion of two research studies related to the critical areas of support coursework and CTRS profile demographics. The latter study was conducted during January of 2004 and involved a comprehensive study of 2000 CTRSs. Significant results of this study are presented in graphic format within this newsletter.

NCTRC plans to conduct several additional studies during the next year that include investigations of Therapeutic Recreation Outcomes; CTRS Certification Retention; Entry Level Certification Trends Among TR Graduates; and the first-ever CTRS Satisfaction Survey. Much of the

(Continued on page 2)


**From the Chair of the Board**

(Continued from page 1)

following key strategic goals on which NCTRC will focus:

- To increase the number of certificants
- To provide protection for the credential
- To establish the value and worth of the credential
- To maintain an effective and technologically advanced exam program
- To explore mastery level and specialty designated certification programs
- To develop and maintain an effective governance process

You should be aware that all strategic initiatives are approved by the Board of Directors based on data that is research-based to provide factual current information reflective of our profession. The actualization of the strategic plan is then placed into what we term the “Board Work Plan”. This Plan is reviewed and updated regularly at Board meetings.

The Work Plan denotes task assignments for Board committees in harmony with the staff of NCTRC.

You should be proud of the mind set within the walls of NCTRC. The organization is in good hands under the guidance of Dr. Bob Riley and his talented staff. We are all familiar with process review and under Dr. Riley’s administration many of the NCTRC operations are being reviewed as a way to improve service to all of NCTRC’s consumers.

The April Board meeting is also the time when we change Board and Committee membership. We were fortunate to add several talented new members to the Board of Directors: Janet Connolly, Betsy Kennedy, Abbe Leal, and Pat Malik. We also welcomed two new committee members: Jan Hodges to Standards Review and Anne Porter to Exam Management Committees.

Another significant action we all should take to support the profession is to join and participate in professional membership organizations. Both ATRA and NTRS are making significant strides to enhance our professional growth. It is an important time to lend support and advocate for the field as well as for the CTRS credential.

NCTRC maintains good working relationships with our professional membership associations, ATRA and NTRS. I appreciate the liaison calls among respective Board Chairs and Executive Directors of each organization to share current information for collaboration.

We find the meetings to be very beneficial for open communication. We recently discussed marketing strategies. John Shank was appointed to the State Recognition Project on behalf of NCTRC to dialogue with ATRA and NTRS as Sandra Negley’s term on the Board ended. We appreciate Sandy’s efforts in this area.

The NCTRC newsletter is loaded with information relevant to your credential, so read on... Remember to look at the NCTRC website as well. On behalf of the NCTRC Board, we are excited about the opportunity to serve. We appreciate and welcome your comments.

(Continued from page 1)

**From the Executive Director**

information garnered from these studies will be utilized in NCTRC marketing operations in an effort to promote the TR profession and the CTRS credential.

**Marketing:** The primary focus of NCTRC marketing operations is to promote the value of the CTRS credential to a variety of constituents. This goal will be accomplished through a variety of methods including brochures, conference presentations, direct mail campaigns, and attendance at trade shows and expositions sponsored by TR and general health care organizations. The most tangible outcome of the new marketing campaign is the publication of two new promotional brochures entitled “Why Become a CTRS” and “Why Hire a CTRS”. Both of these full-color, tri-fold brochures will be printed and available by the fall of this year.

NCTRC will print large quantities of both brochures for use by CTRSs within educational settings and workplace environments. In addition, an expanded version of the current “CTRS Profile” brochure containing highlights from the CTRS demographic study is scheduled for printing during the latter part of 2004.

**Customer Service:** NCTRC is committed to providing a valid and respected credentialing program while simultaneously offering a high degree of quality customer service. Recent efforts toward meeting this challenge have resulted in the changing of the NCTRC Exam dates in order to accommodate more recent TR graduates. In addition, the NCTRC Website has become a focal point for posting current and important information regarding the CTRS credentialing process. NCTRC staff members have begun an aggressive operational campaign to contact individuals in order to provide reminders of pending deadlines and opportunities to remain actively certified. We have revamped all of our application forms and letters to make them as user friendly as possible. Staff members are focused on responding to all written and verbal correspondences in a quick and courteous manner.

Lastly, plans are nearly completed to initiate the use of credit card payment for select NCTRC transactions by the fall of 2004. This will be followed by new interactive website applications, including the availability of utilizing electronic credit card payment by the end of this year. In summary, all of these activities have been designed and initiated with one goal in mind: to make NCTRC services more readily accessible and available to you…our CTRS customer!

We have been very busy at NCTRC… but not too busy to hear from you! Please, feel free to call, write us, or visit the NCTRC website and let us know your thoughts. We are genuinely open to hearing how we might serve you better and effectively promote the CTRS credential.

Thank you for your continued support of NCTRC and the CTRS credential.
Certification and Membership Organizations: Separate but Equally Important

Karen Luken, CTRS NCTRC Chair 1998-1999

Interactions with various constituents including certificants, educators and students have revealed that confusion still exists as to the purpose and function of professional membership organizations (ATRA, NTRS and TR State Associations) and credentialing organizations (NCTRC). While both types of organizations are committed to enhancing the profession and promoting professional competence, they do so by adhering to separate regulations and by employing different structures and strategies.

The major goal of NCTRC is to protect the public and to promote quality therapeutic recreation services through the credentialing of Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRSs). The major functions of NCTRC are to establish standards, grant recognition to individuals who meet the standards, and to monitor adherence to the standards disciplinary process. NCTRC is accredited by the National Commission of Certifying Agencies (NCCA) of the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA).

NCCA requires credentialing organizations to be separate and distinct from professional organizations and educational institutions. NCTRC is structured as an independent credentialing organization to enhance objectivity and independence. NCCA requires that a certification program be national in scope, operated by a not-for-profit agency, and maintain fiscal autonomy. NCCA also requires that standards are set in an objective manner via a national job analysis study.

Another crucial role of NCTRC is to provide current information to certificants, employers, educators, students, and the general public regarding CTRS standards, the credentialing process, and the value of the CTRS credential. NCTRC also offers verification of credential status to employers.

Professional associations provide a network for professionals and students to develop their common interests. These associations use an array of methods to promote professional competence including educational opportunities, publications, research sponsorship, and setting ethical guidelines.

Professional associations are also concerned with promoting innovative practice and advancing educational opportunities. An association represents its members’ perspectives and therefore has a different obligation in terms of advocating for the advancement of the profession and its members.

Professional associations often provide services not offered by credentialing organizations, including conferences, journals, representation to regulatory bodies, and lobbying. In recent years, professional membership organizations representing the therapeutic recreation profession have increased their lobbying efforts and have made significant progress in advancing the profession at regulatory and legislative hearings. However, by its regulatory structure, NCTRC is not permitted to engage in legislative advocacy or political lobbying. NCTRC is permitted to offer advice and render testimony in legislative manners but it cannot directly participate in lobbying or legislative efforts.

An independent credentialing organization may not deny someone certification based upon their lack of involvement in a professional association. A point of confusion for some is the belief that membership in ATRA or NTRS is equivalent to acquiring and maintaining the CTRS credential via NCTRC. The CTRS credential and affiliation with NCTRC is not related to or indicative of membership in one of the professional membership associations.

ATRA, NTRS, and NCTRC benefit from an organizational liaison relationship that provides for opportunities for on-going information exchange in an official, systematic, and structured manner. This forum provides a means to discuss NCTRC standards and identify trends and issues relevant to the profession. Within this liaison format, all parties maintain their organization autonomy and adherence to their respective missions.

ATRA and NTRS play a critical role in providing input from the profession to NCTRC. The recent standards changes announced by NCTRC reflect one process of changing standards: input from the professional associations and review of NCTRC data to determine the extent of changes supported by current practices. However, practitioners and educators are permitted to go beyond the standards outlined by NCTRC. For example, in the number of required internship hours or course requirements, NCTRC standards stipulate the minimum but set no maximum number of hours. This is one way that the profession continually “raises the bar” and impacts practice and ultimately, the credentialing standards.

Promoting professional competence is a shared mission of NCTRC, NTRS, and ATRA. It is critical that all stakeholders honor their mission while maintaining mutual respect and communication in the attainment of improved professional practice. However, it is critical that constituents understand the unique role and distinct functions each organization represents in achieving the goal of improving and promoting professional practice.

(A version of this article originally appeared in the Spring 1999 NCTRC Newsletter)
The CTRS at a Glance…

NCTRC recently completed several research surveys in an effort to better comprehend the profile of CTRS certificants and to improve its certification services. Provided below are illustrative graphs depicting employment characteristics of active CTRS employed full-time in therapeutic recreation.

CTRS Satisfaction Study

The Satisfaction Study represents the first comprehensive customer satisfaction survey sponsored by NCTRC. The study was conducted during June and July of 2004. A web-based survey was emailed to 1500 randomly selected active CTRSs. A total of 1327 surveys were documented as being delivered to subjects host sites. The return rate was 35.8% based upon the receipt of 475 completed surveys. The findings of several questions that addressed the variables of salary, education, and NCTRC services are provided below in graph format.

Strengthening Our Profession: A Call to Professional Leadership

Diane Groff, Ed.D, TRS/CTRS, NCTRC Board of Directors

The NCTRC Nominations and Elections Committee is currently developing a list of certificants who are interested in being considered for the 2006-2009 Board. Individuals interested in serving on standing committees are needed as well. The NCTRC Board of Directors is comprised of nine positions. Seven positions are determined by election and two positions (e.g., consumer representative and practitioner representative) are appointed by the NCTRC Chair. Each member of the Board must be willing to commit to a three (3) year term that includes two annual three-day meetings as well as several conference calls throughout the year. Board members are not permitted to hold officer level positions with other organizations that could be potentially in a conflict of interest with NCTRC.

If you or someone you know is interested in being considered for a Board or committee nomination please forward the name to the Elections Committee via phone or email. If you have any questions, please contact Diane Groff, at (919) 962-0534, or groff@email.unc.edu; or Bob Riley, at (845) 639-1439, or briley@NCTRC.org
CTRS Profile Study

The Profile Study was conducted in January of 2004 and involved a random sample of 2000 active certificants. Surveys were sent via email and postal mail. The response rate was 49% (979 responses). A total of 970 usable surveys were used in the analysis of the final results. The findings of several questions that addressed the variables of salary, service outcomes, and funding sources are provided below in graph format.

**2004 Annual Certificants Meeting**

Each year, NCTRC conducts its Annual Meeting for CTRSs at the professional conferences of the American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) and the National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS). The official meeting this year will be held in Kansas City, Missouri at the 2004 ATRA Annual Conference. The Annual Meeting will be held at the Crown Center Hyatt on Friday, October 1, 2004 and will start at 5:30 pm. NCTRC will also sponsor a meeting for CTRSs at the NTRS/NRPA Conference in Reno, Nevada. The meeting will be held at the Convention Center on Thursday, October 14, 2004.

The NCTRC Annual Meeting of Certificants is a valuable opportunity for NCTRC to share information regarding current activities, and introduce the Board of Directors, Committees, and Staff. NCTRC has several exciting projects underway that we really look forward to sharing with you. We hope that you will attend the meeting at either conference site. Please share this meeting information with other CTRSs who may be planning to attend the NTRS or ATRA conferences. If you are unable to attend, please contact NCTRC with any concerns or suggestions you may have about your CTRS credential.
Continuing Education Opportunities: The Path Less Traveled

Susan Kaufer, CTRS, NCTRC Credentialing Specialist

Meeting the requirements for NCTRC Recertification does not have to be an expensive or arduous task. If you are unable to attend therapeutic recreation conferences due to time constraints or cost, you may wish to explore alternative opportunities, including those at your workplace, local colleges and on the internet.

NCTRC standards require 50 hours of continuing education during the five-year certification cycle. Continuing education must relate to the NCTRC Job Analysis. Visit the NCTRC website at www.NCTRC.org for a printable version of the NCTRC Job Analysis. There are eight Knowledge Area categories including Background, Diagnostic Groupings and Populations Served, Assessment, Planning the Intervention, Implementing the Individualized Intervention Plan, Documentation and Evaluation, Organizing and Managing Services and Advancement of the Profession. The education opportunities that you choose may be related to your employment or may be a topic that enhances your general professional knowledge.

Here is a list of some alternative methods for acquiring continuing education:

- **Internet** - A simple search for “continuing education” will provide many opportunities for consideration. Many of the internet/online-based continuing education programs can be purchased for a reasonable fee. Upon completion of a post-test, a certificate is usually available and should be submitted for recertification purposes.
- **Academic Courses** - can be audited (8 hours per academic credit; 24 hours for a 3-semester credit course) or taken for credit (15 hours per academic credit; 45 hours for a 3-semester credit course). Academic courses may be taken online or through correspondence. This is a viable option to earn several hours in a relatively short amount of time. A transcript or grade report must be submitted as evidence of completion.
- **Home Study Programs** - such as journal reviews are readily available. Similar to many online programs, educational material can be purchased. Certificates are available upon completion of a post-test for recertification purposes.
- **Hospital/Agency Education** - Are you aware that many of the work related educational sessions or in-services that you attend may be appropriate for recertification? Be certain that the sessions are at least one (1) hour in length. If tracked by your staff development, HR, or education departments, be certain to submit education records that are signed and verifiable.
- **Teleconferences/Audio Seminars** - A growing number of continuing education providers sponsor teleconferences/audio seminars. Make sure that the title and content relates to the NCTRC Job Analysis Knowledge Areas and that you will be able to obtain appropriate documentation to verify attendance.

There are many practical and user-friendly methods of obtaining continuing education hours for NCTRC Recertification. Alternative methods of earning continuing education hours may be available to meet your needs and prove to be more interesting and enjoyable as well.

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Did you know . . .

98.3% of all eligible CTRSs renewed their Annual Maintenance during the May 2004 cycle.

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Item Writers Needed for NCTRC Exam Development

One of the major responsibilities of the Exam Management Committee (EMC) is to monitor the validity and reliability of the NCTRC certification exam. This is accomplished in part by the development of new questions (items) for inclusion in the Computer-Based Testing (CBT) item pool. CTRS volunteers are needed to develop and evaluate approximately 100 new items during the winter and spring of 2005. Recruitment of item writers will begin in September 2004 and continue through January 2005. The selection process for items writers will be completed by early February 2005. All selected individuals will participate in an Item Writing Workshop sponsored by NCTRC via conference call. Development of new exam items will occur between April and June 2005. Proposed exam items will be evaluated and edited using a variety of techniques, prior to use in a pretest format.

A second major task for EMC is the completion of a new Job Analysis Study scheduled for implementation in 2006. The Job Analysis Study provides the foundation of the certification exam and is conducted every 5 to 10 years to reflect changes in the practice of therapeutic recreation. CTRS volunteers are needed to participate in the Job Analysis Study and to guide NCTRC toward the completion of the project. Once the Job Analysis project is completed, volunteer item writers will again be needed as new items are added to the exam to reflect the outcome of the Job Analysis.

If you are interested in being an Item Writer and/or a member of the Item Review Committee, please contact Cris Meneses-Diaz, NCTRC EMC staff liaison at 845-639-1439.

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Item Writers Needed
Continuing Education Hours Awarded
Contact: NCTRC
NCTRC@NCTRC.org
(845)639-1439
The NCTRC Certification Standards serve as the official guidelines for test eligibility status and govern all requirements pertaining to certification and recertification. It is the policy of the NCTRC Board of Directors to post notice of all standard changes well in advance of effective dates. The NCTRC Board of Directors has approved the following changes to the Certification Standards.

1. Field Placement Change: Consecutive period of time during internship.
   Effective Date: April 2004
   The standard pertaining to the required number of weeks in a field placement now reads as follows:

   Consecutive period of time: The field placement experience should be continuous and uninterrupted. In the case
   where serious illness or personal emergency causes absence or the inability to work at least 20 hours per
   week, no more than 2 consecutive weeks of interrupted field placement work will be accepted. Official documentation
   regarding extreme emergencies or severe illness, and field placement logs indicating evidence of completion
   of required 12 week, 480 hour requirement, must be submitted to NCTRC with the application. When a field placement is
   interrupted due to one of these factors, the student should immediately contact NCTRC for Alternative Field Placement
   Guidelines.

   The experience must take place at one agency site and total hours may not be split between two or more sites or accumulated
   over multiple sites. Experiences at two different sites will not be accepted even if they are within the same corporation or
   chain of agencies. An alternative field placement may be considered by NCTRC when a field placement is interrupted due
   to the closing of an agency, termination or resignation, or personal circumstance, which would prevent the CTRS supervisor
   from completing the field placement supervision. When a field placement is interrupted due to one of these factors, the student should immediately contact NCTRC for Alternative Field Placement Guidelines.

2. Eligibility Interpretative Guideline Change: Semester to Quarter Conversion Effective Date: April 2004
   The standard pertaining to the semester and quarter unit conversions now reads as follows:

   Semester and Quarter Unit Conversions:
   A unit is one credit or one hour of academic study. All equations from semester to quarter units in NCTRC standards are
determined by the ratio of one semester hour to 1.33 quarter units or 1 quarter unit to .75 semester hour.

   3. Content Course Requirement: Increase the Required Number of TR Content Coursework to Four Courses:
      Effective Date: December 31, 2007
      The standard pertaining to the required number of therapeutic recreation content courses will read as follows:

      Academic Path:
      “A minimum of 18 semester or 27 quarter credit hours of therapeutic recreation and general recreation content coursework with no less than a minimum of 12 semester or 18 quarter credit hours in therapeutic recreation content. A minimum of 4 courses in therapeutic recreation is required and each course must be a minimum of 3 credit hours; AND…”

      Equivalency Path A & B
      “A minimum of 18 semester or 27 quarter credit hours of upper division or graduate level therapeutic recreation and general recreation content coursework with no less than a minimum of 12 semester or 18 quarter credit hours in upper division or graduate level therapeutic recreation content. A minimum of 4 courses in therapeutic recreation is required and each course must be a minimum of 3 credit hours; AND…”

   4. Content Course Requirement: Increase in Required Number of Therapeutic Recreation Content Courses Completed Prior to Field Placement:
      Effective Date: December 31, 2007
      The standard requiring the majority of TR coursework to be completed prior to the field placement will read as follows:
      The number of required therapeutic recreation content courses that must be completed prior to the field placement is 9 semester or 12 quarter hours in therapeutic recreation content coursework.

5. Reexamination for Recertification Change: Effective Date: October 2004
   The standard pertaining to the reexamination option for recertification will read as follows:

   Certificants who choose to take the NCTRC exam for recertification may only take the last scheduled exam prior to their
   recertification expiration date. For example, certificants within the November recertification cycle can only take the
   October exam for recertification. Certificants within the May recertification cycle can only take the May exam for
   recertification. If a passing score is not obtained then the CTRS certification will be forfeited and the individual may apply
   for recertification through the NCTRC Reentry program.

   The NCTRC Board of Directors has approved the following changes to the Certification Standards for Recertification.

6. Exam registration for Certification and Recertification Effective Date: April 2004
   The standard pertaining to the exam registration for certification and recertification will read as follows:

   An eligible candidate who does not pass the test may register to take the next scheduled test.

7. NCTRC Certification Exam Schedule: Three Administrations per Year.
   Effective Date: October 1, 2004
   The NCTRC Exam will be administered three times a year at Prometric Testing Centers across the United States, Canada &
   Puerto Rico. The following dates will be the next cycle of NCTRC Certification Exams:
   • October 1, 2004 deadline for the January 2005 exam
   • February 1, 2005 deadline for the May 2005 exam
   • July 1, 2005 deadline for the October 2005 exam
   • October 1, 2005 deadline for the January 2006 exam
NCTRC
7 Elmwood Drive,
New City, NY 10956

Visit NCTRC on the Web at:
www.NCTRC.org

Call NCTRC for all your therapeutic recreation certification information:
(845) 639-1439
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NCTRC Board, Committee and Staff

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NOTE: All terms of office, in parenthesis after each name, begin and end in April of each year.

All correspondence to any member of the NCTRC Board, Committees or Staff should be mailed to:

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