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# Press Release

## Candidate calls on the APA Council to Communicate “Equality” Across Predoctoral Internship-types

Dr. Finnerty argued that the Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists takes the position that internships that are “equivalent” to APA-accredited internships exist. Dr. Finnerty argued that employers should not automatically reject applicants that didn’t have APA-accredited internships without considering their individual qualifications.

Orlando, FL, July 31, 2012: APA presidential candidate Todd Finnerty, PsyD went before the APA Council during the plenary session on Tuesday and asked them to introduce and pass a council resolution that all predoctoral internships that lead to graduation from APA-accredited programs and licensure at the state level are equal. The proposed text of the resolution would include

*“There is no empirically-supported difference in trainee outcomes between an APA-accredited internship and a non-accredited internship that currently meets the requirements for graduation from an APA-accredited doctoral program and state licensure as a psychologist. APA’s Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists, adopted by Council as APA Policy February 20, 2010, recognizes the existence of internships which are equivalent to APA internships. These equivalent internships, which are not accredited by APA, can and do produce qualified psychologists who are equivalent to psychologists who completed APA-accredited internships.”*

Dr. Finnerty indicated that he felt the proposed council resolution to communicate equality across predoctoral internship types is needed because some organizations appear to have become “confused” about the Council’s indication that internships that are equivalent to APA-accredited internships exist. The proposed council resolution comes in the wake of a recent proposal that APA advocate for APA-accredited internships being mandated for state licensure. It also comes at a time when some of the largest employers of psychologists are experiencing difficulty filling psychologist positions (and have also started hiring non-doctoral level professionals such as marriage and family therapists). Despite hiring MFT’s that didn’t have APA-accredited internships, some of these employers have required that psychologists have APA-accredited internships in order to apply for employment with them. Dr. Finnerty argued that there is no evidence that APA-accredited internships have better outcomes than equivalent internships and that psychologists’ scope of practice shouldn’t be artificially limited by barring them from these settings without considering their individual qualifications. Learn more at [www.toddfinnerty.com](http://www.toddfinnerty.com)

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## ***Communicating Equality Across Predoctoral Internship-types***

We're requesting APA Council pass a policy resolution that addresses the spirit of the following statement:

There is no empirically-supported difference in trainee outcomes between an APA-accredited internship and a non-accredited internship that currently meets the requirements for graduation from an APA-accredited doctoral program and state licensure as a psychologist. APA's Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists, adopted by Council as APA Policy February 20, 2010, recognizes the existence of internships which are equivalent to APA internships. These equivalent internships, which are not accredited by APA, can and do produce qualified psychologists who are equivalent to psychologists who completed APA-accredited internships.

### **The issue's importance to psychology or to society as a whole;**

This policy issue could potentially change the lives of some of our psychologist-colleagues by helping to reduce the barriers to employment which they experience due to employers and organizations instituting the non-evidence based requirement of having had an APA-accredited internship just to submit an application.

It will help society by increasing the chance that qualified professionals, who are currently barred from working in certain settings, could soon practice in these settings to the full extent of their licensure as permitted under state law. Some of these psychologists are multilingual and others have developed a culturally-competent ability to work with under-served populations. They should not be barred from working in a setting without that setting even examining their individual merits and qualifications.

### **Representative scientific or empirical findings related to the resolution;**

APA's Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists, adopted by Council as APA Policy 2/20/2010, suggests to states that an APA or CPA accredited predoctoral internship, or their equivalent, be required for state licensure. The Council has already recognized, and through the Council's actions APA Policy recognizes, that internships that are equivalent and therefore equal to APA & CPA accredited internships exist and has made room for them in the Model Act for State Licensure. The Council clearly intended for equivalent internships to be represented in the Model Act for State Licensure. It is reasonable that this "null hypothesis" presented by Council is the least restrictive on APA members. It stands to reason that anyone using restrictive selection criteria such as requiring APA-accredited internships for employment has the burden to prove that those criteria are evidence-based.

There is no empirical evidence to demonstrate that internships that are "equivalent" with APA & CPA accredited internships and that allow trainees to graduate from APA-accredited doctoral programs and get licenses as psychologists are of any less quality than internships that are accredited by APA. There is no empirical evidence to demonstrate that the trainee outcomes from these non-accredited but equivalent internships are any different than the trainee outcomes from APA-accredited internships.

**The likelihood of the resolution having a constructive impact on public opinion or policy.**

This policy statement can impact the opinion of those who may seek to employ psychologists. Some employers currently automatically screen out candidates who did not have an APA internship without reviewing the individual merits of that candidate. For example, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the largest employer of psychologists, requires an APA-accredited predoctoral internship or an internship at a VA that had not yet achieved accreditation in order to be employed at a VA. The Department of Veterans Affairs is currently seeking to hire a sizeable number of mental health professionals including psychologists as well as social workers and marriage and family therapists. At a time when non-doctoral level mental health professionals such as MFTs and social workers are seeing their roles and opportunities expanding, we must take care to not artificially reduce the potential labor supply of psychologists seeking to “serve-those-who-have-served” by favoring one internship over another when Council has already termed them equivalent.

This policy statement will assist advocacy and education efforts with some of the largest employers of psychologists. In addition, it may deter other employers and organizations from unfairly restricting some psychologists’ abilities to practice in these settings to the full extent of their licensure.

**Resolutions approved by Council are understood to reflect what APA values or believes and, in most cases, does not commit APA to any action. If approval of the resolution requires that specific action be taken, the following information must also be provided:  
Suggestions on how it should be implemented, if it is passed;**

This resolution does not commit any APA resources.

**Breakdown of staff resources or association funds needed to implement the resolution.**

No APA resources would be needed to implement this policy.

**Additional background:**

26% of students participating in the APPIC internship match in 2012 did not match to an internship site. When they don’t match, many of our trainees accept quality, non-accredited internships in order to continue their lives, finish their degrees and obtain state licensure as a psychologist. These internships are monitored by our APA-accredited doctoral programs and since they are equivalent to APA-accredited internships, they allow our trainees to get licensed after being vetted by our state licensing boards. However, many in this group are also the same professionals who later flee to the “exit-doors” of APA when they begin to feel that their professional association is complicit in allowing employers to “weed-them-out” based on a non-empirically supported requirement instead of their individual merits. They feel that organizations that argue that “no one will trust a psychologist that didn’t have an accredited internship and board certification” are being disingenuous and self-serving as they watch the roles of non-doctoral level mental health practitioners expand. APA is bleeding-out these members through a hole on this issue; we must plug the hole by standing up for them. We cannot let this bleeding hole continue to grow bigger as an entire generation of psychologists experience what it’s like to go through the internship crisis (and a significant number of them do not match to APA-accredited internships). They may have become confused and may not be aware of APA’s policy that their internships are “equivalent” to APA internships. This proposed resolution is needed to increase the clarity of our position and tell these current and former members that APA does represent them as well. APA also represents psychologists who didn't have APA-accredited internships. In the wake of a recent proposal to have APA advocate for having APA-accredited internships required for state licensure it would be unfortunate to

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see our declining membership greatly intensify due to an increased loss of members who didn't have APA-accredited internships. While not all of these professionals earned Psy.D.'s, some did.

It has been reported that over 100 APA-accredited internship sites participating in the APPIC match publicly declare a preference for Ph.D.'s over Psy.D.'s. These over 100 sites publicly brag about using stereotypes to make their selections and not the specific qualifications of some of the applicants. Psy.D.'s are a qualified and diverse group of trainees and their diversity helps improve our workforce and reduce disparities in how mental health care is delivered in our country. However, some internship sites hang "No Psy.D. Need Apply Signs" when they communicate their preference against Psy.D.'s. This produces a "playing-field" for APA- accredited internships that is not a level one. Not surprisingly Psy.D.'s tend to not match to these internship sites. However, these sites have already publicly stated that they prefer to not take Psy.D.'s and therefore it's unlikely that the individual merits of a Psy.D. applicant had anything to do with whether they matched there. Many of the trainees who did not match on this "non-level playing field" then go on to take non-accredited internships. As a result, they subsequently face a job market where some of our largest employers use non-evidence-based selection criteria, an APA internship, to automatically deny their applications instead of considering each candidates' individual merits and qualifications. These employers may have become confused and may not be aware of APA's policy that their internships are "equivalent" to APA internships. This proposed resolution is needed to increase the clarity of our position and tell organizations and potential employers that our policy supports them doing business with our APA members who did not have APA-accredited internships. It is our hope that they be allowed to practice in these settings to the full extent of their licensure as permitted under state law.

**Subject:** Communicating Equality Across Predoctoral Internship-types

**Issue:** There is too much confusion on the part of APA members and non-member psychologists related to APA's policy on equivalent internships and APA-accredited internships. There is also too much confusion on the part of employers leading some to require APA-accredited internships for employment as a psychologist when this practice is not evidence-based.

**Relation to APA's Goals and Objectives:**

**Goal 1: *Maximize Organizational Effectiveness:*** We will enhance communications on our policy related to equivalent internships to increase member engagement and reduce the number of members leaving the association due to their confusion over our views on APA-accredited internships. Retaining members and also bringing back formerly-alienated members will assist the ongoing financial health of the organization. It will also help the organization continue to attract a diverse group of members.

**Goal 2: *Expand Psychology's Role in Advancing Health:*** We will help to promote psychology's role in decreasing health care disparities by assisting a more inclusive group of psychologists find greater access to service opportunities. We will seek to reduce the barriers these psychologists experience in trying to help meet our country's growing need for mental health services.

**Goal 3: *Increase Recognition of Psychology as a Science:*** We will educate others about the impact that using non-evidence-based selection criteria can have on real people, and our science-based actions will improve our credibility and the lives of others.

**Estimated Costs/Staff Resources:** This resolution does not commit any APA resources.

**Main Motion:** A Council Resolution stating that "There is no empirically-supported difference in trainee outcomes between an APA-accredited internship and a non-accredited internship that currently meets the requirements for graduation from an APA-accredited doctoral program and state licensure as a psychologist. APA's Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists, adopted by Council as APA Policy February 20, 2010, recognizes the existence of internships which are equivalent to APA internships. These equivalent internships, which are not accredited by APA, can and do produce qualified psychologists who are equivalent to psychologists who completed APA-accredited internships."

**Expected Outcomes/Products:** A Council Resolution would help educate organizations and potential employers that psychologists who did not have APA-accredited internships can still be competent and qualified. It will also help the many APA members and non-member psychologists who did not match to an APA-accredited internship feel that APA does consider their interests and needs. It communicates to our colleagues that APA will stand with them for a *better* future; not a bleaker one. At a time when non-doctoral level mental health professionals are not seeing this same "APA-internship barrier" to employment with these organizations and have even expanded their roles, this resolution will help to decrease the unfair barriers to working in some settings that qualified psychologists are currently experiencing.

# Defending your Future

Didn't match to an APA  
internship? *I'm your candidate.*



Those presidential candidates and organizations that suggest no one will trust a psychologist without an accredited internship and board certification are either out-of-touch or are being disingenuous and self-serving. Health care reform could lead to a rush to the bottom, particularly on the part of insurance companies, ACOs, and anyone else who'll try to save money through masters and even BA-level practitioners. We've seen this move to "lower-cost" providers start already. We should do more to promote our role providing quality, Evidence-Based Practice-- not proliferate expensive "hoops" that have not been empirically shown to be any different to equivalent internships.

Some Psy.D.'s are multilingual and others are culturally-competent to help under-served populations. Despite this diversity, over 100 APA-accredited internship sites publicly declare a preference for Ph.D.'s over Psy.D.'s. It's not a level "playing field" for getting internships when sites brag about using stereotypes in their selection instead of the specific qualifications of individual candidates. Internship sites should not hang "No Psy.D. need apply" signs.

After experiencing this non-level playing field for internships, trainees that didn't match often take non-accredited internships to continue their lives, get degrees from their APA-accredited doctoral programs and get licensed after being vetted by a licensing board. Unfortunately, they then have their scope of practice artificially limited. Some employers use non-empirically supported selection criteria to automatically reject applicants instead of considering their individual qualifications. We shouldn't be barring psychologists from these settings based on APA-internships and artificially limiting their ability to practice to the full extent of their licensure. The need is great and practitioners that have never even obtained a doctorate let alone APA-internships are seeing their roles expanding. I'll also defend our professionals from the recent proposal to give APA a "monopoly" on internships and require APA-internships for state licensure. The APA Council must act to educate the public that internships that are "equivalent" to APA internships exist and produce competent professionals.

**Rank Todd Finnerty, Psy.D. #1 this September.**