

May 18, 1998

H. Julia Hannay, Ph.D.

Chair, Planning Committee

The Houston Conference on Specialty Education and Training in Clinical Neuropsychology

Dear Dr. Hannay: The Houston Conference Policy Statement on training and education in clinical neuropsychology clearly outlines for the first time a comprehensive model of what constitutes appropriate, integrated training and education for psychologists aspiring to practice (and be recognized) as clinical neuropsychologists. Although constructed by a small group of individuals, it clarifies areas of core competence and restates the important point that continued education is not the prime vehicle for identifying oneself as a clinical neuropsychologist. The Board of Directors of the National Academy of Neuropsychology clearly supports and endorses this view of education and training. As a Board responsible to our membership, we would be remiss if we did not clarify other important reactions to the Houston Conference itself, and the Policy Statement that it produced. Responding to a letter soliciting reactions to the Policy Statement, 62% of 173 National Academy of Neuropsychology members endorsed the document. Among the positive reactions were the perceptions that the document was “very accommodating,” “thoughtful and comprehensive,” “timely,” and “well prepared.”

Thirty-eight percent of the 173 members responding to that letter, however, did not endorse the Policy Statement, or were equivocal in their response. Expressed concerns from these members included: (1) the perception that delegate selection for this Conference was done by psychologists not elected to represent them concerning matters of training, education or credentialing; (2) the perception that the process of selection was not done in a democratic way; (3) diversity of opinion did not appear to be sought or encouraged, beyond those attending the meeting; and, (4) the potential acceptance and application of this Policy Statement seemed to be occurring before the field had adequate opportunity to reflect or vote on it. For example, one member observed that the Houston Conference Policy Statement was not available to our general membership until November of 1997. Yet, at the INS meeting in February, 1998, it was noted that requests for site visitor training for postdoctoral residency programs were available that specifically indicated that the programs followed the Houston Conference Policy Statement recommendations.

In addition, some of our members expressed concern about the impact this document will have on: (1) the traditionally held view that accomplishment of a doctorate degree in psychology and obtaining licensure is, in and of itself, adequate to practice; and, (2) the freedom of practicing neuropsychologists to use the title of neuropsychologist and to choose which credentialing agency to apply to for further documentation of their professional competency.

The Houston Conference Policy Statement is a valuable working document in progress. It requires continued development and modification in order to be responsive to the needs of our profession, while at the same time providing appropriately high standards for training, education and credentialing. We reaffirm the importance and value of high standards for the field, the need to obtain APA approved predoctoral internship training and the value of psychologists obtaining postdoctoral residency training to further develop their academic and clinical competencies. We stand ready as an organization to help our field implement continued dialogue on this important

document and to do so with broad representation from within the field of clinical neuropsychology.

Finally, I would like to end with a personal note. While I found the document strong in terms of standards for training and education, there was no mention of the importance of training clinical neuropsychologists in the art of patient care. While the scientific basis of clinical neuropsychology is unquestionably important, so is the development of clinical skills for understanding patients' psychological suffering and assisting in this important aspect of their care. Hopefully, this dimension can be further incorporated as the field develops standards of training and education.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the National Academy of Neuropsychology, I hope these comments are helpful to you and to the field.

Sincerely

George P. Prigatano, Ph.D.
President, National Academy of Neuropsychology

Submitted with the approval of the Board of Directors

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July 1, 1998
George F. Prigitano, Ph.D.
President, NAN

Dear Dr. Prigitano: Thank you for your letter of May 18, 1998 informing me of the endorsement of the Policy Statement of the Houston Conference by the Board of the National Academy of Neuropsychology. It is gratifying that the boards of all of the sponsoring organizations have endorsed the Policy Statement. Clinical neuropsychologists continue to take the lead in professional psychology and at APA in the development of education and training of future psychologists in their specialty. The development of an integrated model of training at the doctoral, internship, and residency level is unprecedented. The implications of the conference will now have to be considered and I am sure that there will be lots of beneficial discussion by the members of all of the sponsoring organizations.

I was pleased to get feedback from the membership of NAN as well. It is encouraging to learn that the majority of responses were supportive of the Policy Statement, and also worthwhile to understand the concerns expressed by some.

Thank you for your comments and those of your membership. I look forward to seeing you at APA.

Sincerely,
H. Julia Hannay
Chair