



# UC Collaborative

February 11, 2025

To: Respiratory Care Board of California  
3750 Rosin Court, Suite 100.  
Sacramento, CA 95834

Dear Members of the Respiratory Care Board of California,

The UC Collaborative represents the respiratory therapy programs across the University of California system, including UCLA, UC San Diego, UC Davis, UC Irvine, and UCSF, working collectively to advance respiratory care education and practice.

On behalf of the UC Collaborative, which employs 5-10% of Respiratory Therapists (RTs) in California and plays a pivotal role in advancing both membership and research within our profession, we are writing to express our strong support for the implementation of higher educational requirements for Respiratory Therapists across the state. Our position aligns with the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC), which has long advocated for a bachelor's degree as the entry-level standard for Respiratory Therapists.

Recent survey data collected from managers within the UC Health System highlights overwhelming support for advancing the minimum educational requirement to a bachelor's degree. Specifically, 39 respondents in management level positions (74%) affirmed support for this transition, with only one dissenting response and 13 expressing uncertainty. Additionally, 48 of 54 respondents (89%) believe this change is necessary to align our profession with other healthcare disciplines, further demonstrating the widespread agreement on this issue.

Evidence from current research further underscores the positive impact of higher education on patient care. A study published in the *Canadian Journal of Respiratory Therapy* (Kaur et al., 2023) demonstrated that patients with COVID-19 pneumonia experienced significantly improved discharge outcomes when over 85% of their care was provided by RTs holding advanced degrees. These patients transitioned to good outcomes at a rate 3.72 times higher than those treated primarily by RTs without advanced degrees ( $p = .001$ ). Similarly, RTs with adult critical care competencies demonstrated even greater impact, transitioning patients to good outcomes 5.10 times more frequently ( $p < .001$ ). These findings underscore the value of advanced education in enhancing patient outcomes and the overall standard of respiratory care.

The AARC's 2019 report (*BSRT.Masters.AARC, 2019*) set a strategic goal for 80% of practicing RTs to obtain a bachelor's degree or be actively pursuing one. The report identified key barriers, including limited availability of bachelor's programs and challenges in recruitment. Our survey findings echo these concerns, with respondents noting that the lack of available BSRT programs in California remains a significant obstacle. However,



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the long-term benefits of improved patient outcomes, elevated professional standards, and alignment with other healthcare professions far outweigh these challenges.

Survey respondents also expressed strong support for standardizing educational requirements for leadership roles across all UC campuses, with 44 of 52 respondents (85%) in favor. Standardization would ensure consistency in clinical excellence and professional development opportunities while enhancing workforce preparedness for the evolving healthcare landscape.

While concerns exist regarding recruitment and retention, we believe that a well-planned transition, including financial assistance programs and expanded BSRT program offerings, can mitigate these challenges. Ensuring tuition reimbursement and employer-supported pathways to degree completion will be critical in making this shift feasible and equitable.

In conclusion, the UC Collaborative strongly urges the Respiratory Care Board of California to take decisive action in advancing educational standards for Respiratory Therapists. This transition is vital to ensuring the future of our profession and, most importantly, improving the quality of care for our patients. We are committed to supporting this initiative and stand ready to collaborate on its successful implementation.

Thank you for considering our recommendation. We appreciate your leadership in advancing respiratory care in California.

Sincerely,



Matthew Dartt

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The following signatures represent the Directors of Respiratory Care from the University of California campuses **UC Davis, UCSF, UCSD, UCI, and UCLA** confirming our support for the survey results and the advancement of educational standards for Respiratory Therapists:

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Director, Respiratory Care  
UC Davis Medical Center

Samantha J. Scott-Marquina MS, RRT  
Director, Department of Respiratory Care  
UCSF Medical Center | Parnassus | Mt. Zion | Mission Bay

Jacqui Soucy MHA, HRT-NPS, ACCS  
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