February 24, 2015

Dr. Thomas Skalko, PhD.
President, Board of Directors
Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
1361 Park Street
Clearwater, Florida 33756

Dear Dr. Skalko:

As President of the American Art Therapy Association, it is my privilege to submit the following information to the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) as the art therapy profession’s application to form a Council on Accreditation of Art Therapy Education as an approved CAAHEP Committee on Accreditation (CoA). Art therapy gained unanimous approval on October 24, 2014, as an eligible profession to participate in the CAAHEP accreditation system.

1. Sponsor Organization

The sponsor organization for the Council on Accreditation of Art Therapy Education (CAATE) will be the American Art Therapy Association (AATA). Founded in 1969, AATA is a non-profit membership, advocacy and educational organization representing educators, students, professionals, researchers and others involved in the art therapy profession. It serves its members and the public by providing standards of professional competence for the art therapy profession and promoting knowledge in, and of, the field of art therapy. AATA works in concert with 42 affiliated state and regional chapters and has 5,000 national and international members. It is recognized as the world leader in promoting scholarly research in the field of art therapy and advancing understanding of visual art as both healing and life enhancing.

AATA, through its Education Committee, establishes program and curriculum standards for master’s level art therapy degree programs, and the Educational Programs Approval Board (EPAB) grants initial and continuing education program approval and monitors the compliance of each approved program with AATA educational standards. Degree programs approved by EPAB require 60 credit hours of coursework and typically take at least two academic years to complete. The course curriculum includes training in studio art (drawing, painting, sculpture, etc.), the creative process, psychological development, group therapy, art therapy assessment, psychodiagnostics, research methods, and multicultural diversity competence. Students must also complete 100 hours of supervised practicum, and 600 hours of supervised art therapy internship.

EPAB has approved 39 master’s-level art therapy programs that are offered thirty-five accredited educational institutions in twenty states, Montreal, Quebec, and the District of Columbia. Two
additional institutions, located in Arizona and British Columbia, have recently applied for approval of art therapy master’s degree programs. We anticipate that these forty-one programs will constitute the initial core of an art therapy accreditation system that will be international in scope and will eventually provide accreditation for art therapy programs at both the master’s and doctoral degree levels.

2. Need for an Art Therapy Committee on Accreditation

Educational program accreditation provided by a nationally recognized Commission on Accreditation has become a necessity for future growth and recognition of art therapy as a profession. Accreditation will enhance the quality, rigor and consistency of art therapy master’s degree programs through adoption of program requirements and review procedures modeled on proven national standards that:

- emphasize student achievement and high expectations for teaching, clinical training, research, and service to the public;
- enhance procedures for measuring compliance with art therapy academic standards and for measuring student and educational program performance;
- increase accountability through clear and consistent communication with the academic community and the public about art therapy academic standards and student achievement;
- assure increased involvement and input by all interested parties in developing art therapy program requirements and implementing fair and consistent decision making; and
- facilitate ongoing self-analysis by art therapy programs and sponsoring institutions, recognition of the areas for improvement, and planning for innovation and improvement.

In combination with the strengthened academic standards recently approved by AATA’s Education Committee and Board of Directors, these more rigorous program requirements and review procedures will increase the visibility and standing of art therapy educational programs within the academic community; assure prospective students that accredited art therapy programs will adequately prepare them for credentialing, licensure and employment; and encourage additional educational institutions to sponsor art therapy post-graduate programs. Accreditation also will provide needed national visibility and recognition that will strengthen perceptions of art therapy in the eyes of regulators, employers, government agencies and the general public as a distinct professional discipline with high standards of academic training and professional practice.

In addition, a recognized program of educational accreditation will enhance the ability of art therapists to gain professional art therapy licenses. Educational program accreditation is becoming a standard requirement for new health-related licenses in many states as licensing agencies and boards turn increasingly to national accrediting bodies to assure the quality, consistency and accuracy of academic training and professional credentials.

3. CAATE Mission and Purpose

The mission of the proposed Committee on Accreditation of Art Therapy Education (CAATE) is to promote the highest levels of professional training and competence of art therapists through:

- development and promotion of professional preparation standards;
- promotion of excellence in art therapy curriculum and program development;
- in collaboration with CAAHEP, accreditation of art therapy post-graduate programs that meet or exceed minimum accreditation standards; and
- encouragement of educational program self-assessment and continuing improvement.
The purpose of CAATE is to provide effective leadership in the accreditation of art therapy post-graduate education which results in a standard of excellence for safe, effective and responsible practice of professional art therapy. CAATE members will commit to cooperate with CAAHEP and AATA to establish, maintain and promote standards for art therapy education and appropriate accreditation guidelines that:

- conform to CAAHEP’s purpose, mission and values;
- effectively prepare students for safe and effective practice in the wide diversity of settings and with the diverse client populations that are served by professional art therapists;
- establish requirements for academic quality and measurable program outcomes that recognize and preserve an institution’s responsibility to determine program priorities and structures within the framework of its own institutional mission;
- encourage self-evaluation and continuing development of art therapy education programs to remain responsive to the needs of clients and consumers and the changing nature of safe and effective delivery of healthcare and mental health services;
- promote involvement of interested representatives of the public in establishing policies and procedures and assuring fair and consistent decision making and program review;
- require accredited programs to provide reliable information to the public on their performance and student achievement;
- preserve student confidentiality and privacy of student records;
- support research and development of diverse theory and methods of art therapy practice; and
- create inclusive and supportive learning environments that consistently strive to attract, enroll, and retain diverse student populations.

CAATE members also would commit to promoting best practices in professional accreditation through maintaining collaborative relationships with other CAAHEP Committees on Accreditation; with related professional accreditation organizations, licensure and certification bodies; and with professional associations to improve professional accreditation and enhance the practice competencies of art therapists.

4. CAATE Policies and Procedures

In addition to preparing a written statement of standards and guidelines to implement CAATE’s mission and purpose, an initial responsibility of CAATE committee members will be to draft and approve written policies and procedures for accreditation of art therapy education programs. Policies and procedures will incorporate traditional process-oriented review procedures with outcomes based accreditation review that are consistent with CAAHEP’s policies and procedures.

CAATE policies and procedures will establish the criteria and actions with which CAATE will determine compliance by art therapy educational programs with CAAHEP’s Standards and Guidelines through a process that requires review of each program’s written application and self study report and on-site evaluations to verify information included in the self study report. Policies and procedures will define the types of decisions and actions CAATE may make based on this review and on-site evaluation, the actions to be taken in submitting accreditation recommendations for CAAHEP review,
actions required subsequent to CAAHEP notification of an accreditation decision to the educational institution seeking accreditation, and the procedures available to educational institutions to remedy any noted deficiencies.

CAATE policies and procedures also will include specific written guidance relating to the following:

- requirements for CAATE committee structure, composition, and member terms and selection procedures;
- responsibilities of the CAATE chair and committee members;
- procedures to assure objective and fair program review and independence from the sponsoring organization in all policy-making and accreditation determinations;
- policies to assure substantially equivalent application of accreditation standards and procedures to U.S. and non-U.S. educational institutions and programs;
- requirements and procedures for self study reviews and on site evaluations;
- data requirements relating to program performance and student outcomes for both initial self study reports and annual program reporting;
- procedures for soliciting suggestions from all communities of interest for periodic revision of curriculum, program and outcome standards, and collaborating with the AATA Education Committee in reviewing proposed revisions prior to submitting revised Standards and Guidelines to the CAAHEP Standards Committee;
- guidelines on format, content and submission requirements for annual reports;
- requirements for on-going program self-evaluation and program improvement;
- guidelines for monitoring program performance based on annual report data and actions to be taken to remedy deficiencies;
- procedures to promote accountability and transparency by providing accurate and consistent information to the public on program performance and student outcomes; and
- requirements for substantive and timely response to program or public concerns and complaints.

5. Art Therapy Communities of Interest

We envision CAATE as having a broad network of communities of interest that include both members of the profession and representatives of the public that are involved with, or have an interest in, training, practice, and research in art therapy and the provision of art therapy services to the public. Communities of interest within the profession include art therapy educators, art therapy practitioners, certified art therapy supervisors, and recent art therapy program graduates. Communities of interest representing the broader public would include consumers of art therapy services, art therapy students, private employers of art therapists, representatives of state and local agencies or programs with employed or affiliated art therapists, administrators of sponsoring educational institutions, art therapy researchers, and journal editors. An additional community of interest with responsibilities to both the profession and the public is the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB), the independent organization responsible for professional credentialing of art therapists and administering the national art therapy competency examination used to qualify art therapists for credentials and state licensing.

CAAHEP accreditation standards would require educational programs to solicit input and involvement of representatives of these public groups in program administration and review of program and student
performance through advisory committees at the program, department, or institutional level and other procedures. Representatives of the public and outside communities of interest also must be included within CAATE’s membership. As described below, at least three CAATE committee positions are to be filled by public members representing various non-art therapist communities of interest. These members would be selected on a rotating basis from among the communities of interest as designated public member positions become available and eligible candidates can be identified and express a willingness to serve.

6. CAATE Composition

In order to maintain high standards of quality for art therapy education and remain responsive to the needs of consumers, CAATE will seek to establish and maintain a balanced and qualified membership. Art therapy educators, practitioners, and public representatives will work together within the CAATE framework to develop, maintain and promote standards for art therapy education and address the needs of art therapy educational programs, art therapy professionals, employers of art therapists and, ultimately, consumers of art therapy services.

The membership of CAATE will be comprised of ten (10) to twelve (12) members, consisting of a committee chair and not less than nine (9) committee members. CAATE’s membership must include at least three (3) art therapy educators, three (3) art therapy professionals engaged in the delivery of art therapy services, and three (3) members representing the public. Members would serve for rotating three-year terms, with no member serving longer than two consecutive terms. The initial CAATE chair will be an art therapy education program director or program coordinator appointed by AATA’s President for a three-year term. Subsequent chairs will be selected by vote of the CAATE membership from its existing members.

The Association’s current nine-member Educational Programs Approval Board (EPAB) will comprise CAATE’s initial membership. EPAB’s membership is currently divided among art therapy educators and practitioners, with one public member. EPAB members currently hold staggered terms with the terms of at least three members scheduled to expire each year during the next three years. Current EPAB members have expressed a willingness to serve in dual roles as EBAP and CAATE members during the period of transition to a fully operational accreditation program. This will provide for an initial CAATE membership with considerable years of experience implementing academic standards and performing program reviews. Once operational, CAATE will have immediate applications from, at minimum, eight educational institutions with pending requests for EPAB approval, or scheduled EPAB reviews for re-approval during 2015, as they will be asked to delay their applications until 2016 to allow them to be the first programs to seek accreditation under CAAHEP/CAATE.

New CAATE members will be selected from nominations submitted by CAATE members, AATA members, AATA state or regional chapters, CAAHEP accredited programs, art therapy professionals, and employers and consumers of art therapy services. Sitting CAATE members will review all nominations and identify nominees that reflect the diverse communities of interest in art therapy. CAATE members will give priority in filling open member positions to adding public members that represent different communities of interest, and then to maintaining the required balance in membership between art therapy educators, practitioners, and public members.
7. CAATE Budget and Financial Viability

CAATE will operate with a fiscal year budget that begins on July 1st to correspond to the fiscal year structures of CAAHEP, AATA and current Educational Programs Approval Board (EPAB). Using the current EPAB structure to transition to the new committee on accreditation not only provides the committee with considerable years of program review experience, it allows continuing maintenance fees paid by EPAB-approved programs to help fund most of the committee’s meeting, travel and miscellaneous expenses during the initial fiscal years FY2015 to FY2017. EPAB fees will provide $15,000 in estimated revenue during FY2015 and will decline to $10,500 in FY2017 as more EPAB-approved programs seek accreditation. EPAB fee revenue will phase out completely during FY2020 when the last of EBAP’s 39 approved programs are expected to begin the process of CAAHEP accreditation.

Revenue from accreditation-related fees paid to CAATE will begin to replace EPAB fees beginning in FY2017, when combined accreditation fee revenue of $9,475 is projected to account for one-third of the committee’s budget. Initial fees to be paid by educational institutions applying for accreditation are projected as $1,000 for current EPAB-approved programs and $1,250 for non-approve programs, with a $1,500 annual fee paid by all accredited programs. During FY2017, CAATE members will need to determine the level of committee-funded staff support required to maintain and expand its activities and adjust these fee amounts accordingly. As initially projected, accreditation-related fee revenue will provide $50,900 to fund approximately 88 percent of the committee’s budget with a half-time administrative staff person during FY2019, and provide estimated revenue of $57,050 that, together with contributions by AATA and supporting organizations, should provide for a budget surplus in FY2020.

Additional funding to support CAATE operations throughout the projected FY2015-2020 transition period will be provided by AATA as the sponsoring organization. AATA is committed to provide at least $35,000 to help fund the committee’s operations during the initial two years of the transition period. AATA’s contributions will decline as CAATE accreditation fee revenue increases during FY2017, with AATA committing to continue to provide at least $12,500 annually through FY2020. AATA is also committed to soliciting donations to support CAATE operations from organizations within the art therapy profession, such as the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB), the private publisher of AATA’s and other professional journals, and other interested parties. AATA will also seek to have ATCB join in seeking CAAHEP approval as a sponsor organization for CAATE by FY2017.

Other than membership fees paid to CAAHEP, major continuing cost centers in the CAATE budget will include committee meeting and travel expenses, administrative and contract support services, and personnel costs. Expenses for EPAB meetings and travel will total $15,000 during FY2015, increasing to $18,000 in FY2018 to account for the larger EPAB/CAATE committee membership. Travel-related expenses for accreditation site-visit would be paid separately by applying educational institutions. Annual costs for meetings and travel are projected to increase to $20,000 in FY2020.

Administrative costs, including personnel and contract support services, will be provided primarily by AATA staff during the initial two fiscal years (FY2015-2016), with most administrative responsibilities transferred to a paid, half-time administrative staff person beginning in FY2017. CAATE members will determine at that time if a half-time position is sufficient for supporting
CAATE’s projected accreditation schedule or if additional staff support is needed. Fiscal year administrative and personnel costs are projected to increase incrementally each fiscal year from $36,750 in FY2017 to $40,496 in FY2020 if the half-time staff position is maintained. The cost of contract support services funded by AATA for policy development and planning is projected to decline during this period and to be phased out completely in FY2020. Potential administrative costs for developing and supporting a CAATE website will be minimized throughout much of the projected six-year budget period through use of a linked webpage to the CAAHEP website.

Projected revenue from all sources is expected to exceed total CAATE expenses, including annual allocations of $2,000 to a contingency fund, beginning in FY2015. By the close of fiscal year 2019, it is anticipated that CAATE will have completed application reviews and recommended that CAAHEP provide initial or conditional accreditation for 29 former EPAB-approved art therapy master’s degree programs and 6 accredited institutions with art therapy program not previously approved by EPAB. If approved by CAAHEP, annual fees paid by these 35 programs are projected to provide $52,500 in revenue in FY2020, contributing to an estimated budget surplus of $27,154 during the final year that the remaining 10 EPAB-approved art therapy programs will apply for CAAHEP accreditation.

The American Art Therapy Association welcomes the opportunity to form a Council on Accreditation of Art Therapy Education to be a member committee of the CAAHEP accreditation system. We are committed to the committee’s success. To that end, we will provide the committee with the initial financial and staff support, and the independence of operation and decision-making, to enable it to meet all requirements and expectations of CAAHEP membership and to achieve its mission of promoting the highest standards of professional training and competence for the art therapy profession.

We believe that a CAAHEP-affiliated committee on accreditation is essential to the future of our profession and appreciate your consideration of this application.

Respectfully,

Sarah Deaver, PhD, ATR-BC
President, American Art Therapy Association