

Letter to the SIOP Executive Committee

As a group of current and former chairs of psychology departments, we are writing to express our opinions about the current draft of SIOP's position on licensing. We know that the issue of licensing has been debated for quite a long time and that in more recent weeks many opinions have been shared with the Executive Committee. Many of us have already stated our thoughts individually about the broad array of issues related to licensing of I-O psychologists. Here, however, we want to collectively express an opinion from our perspective as faculty members and academic leaders of psychology departments that house I-O programs.

Our position can be stated clearly. We believe that the SIOP position now being proposed, as articulated in the most recent draft, has the potential to seriously threaten the viability of I-O programs in comprehensive psychology departments. In our judgment, the current draft fails to clearly express the position that licensing should not be required for I-O psychologists. Further, its primary focus on educational recommendations will be seen as a substantial step toward an accreditation process that could easily lead to the death of I-O programs in comprehensive psychology departments. Such departments will never allow the allocation of departmental resources (faculty lines, graduate cohort sizes, etc.) that accreditation or even the "quasi accreditation" suggested by the National Registry would require. Instead, departments will rightly question the need to have I-O programs at all and choose to close those programs before entertaining the possibility of a second "clinical like" program in their departments. The consequence will be that I-O programs will end up housed entirely in smaller, more specialized departments or we will have a proliferation of PsyD programs that produce the bulk of our practitioner group. Although it is clear that such departments can do excellent jobs in the training of I-O psychologists, positioning I-O exclusively in such departments runs the risk of further isolating I-O from the core of psychology.

We also believe that most I-O programs, and psychology departments generally, will not accept curriculum requirements from SIOP or any other organization, no matter how benign SIOP may feel they are. Because departments are the gatekeepers of advanced training, such "benign" recommendations will be resisted, exacerbating the existing differences between academics and practitioners.

Of course we recognize that regardless of SIOP's position on licensing most states require licensure of individuals who are going to advertise their services as "I-O psychologists." We must live with this fact, and SIOP should support making licensing as feasible as possible for those who need it. However, we believe that this should and can be done without submitting PhD programs to national accreditation or some other prescribed standards, like those in this SIOP draft document.

We know that many of our colleagues in SIOP have put in a great deal of effort both developing a response to the APA document and in crafting the current draft of a SIOP position on licensing. We thank all involved for their efforts. At the same time, we believe it important to express our opinions influenced by a perspective as chairs or heads of psychology departments. In short, we believe that the SIOP position should be an unequivocal resistance to mandatory licensing, that this position should be stated unequivocally at the outset of any SIOP statement on licensing, that SIOP should increase its efforts to make this position known to state licensing boards, and that SIOP should refrain from developing recommendations for licensing curricula.

Thank you.

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