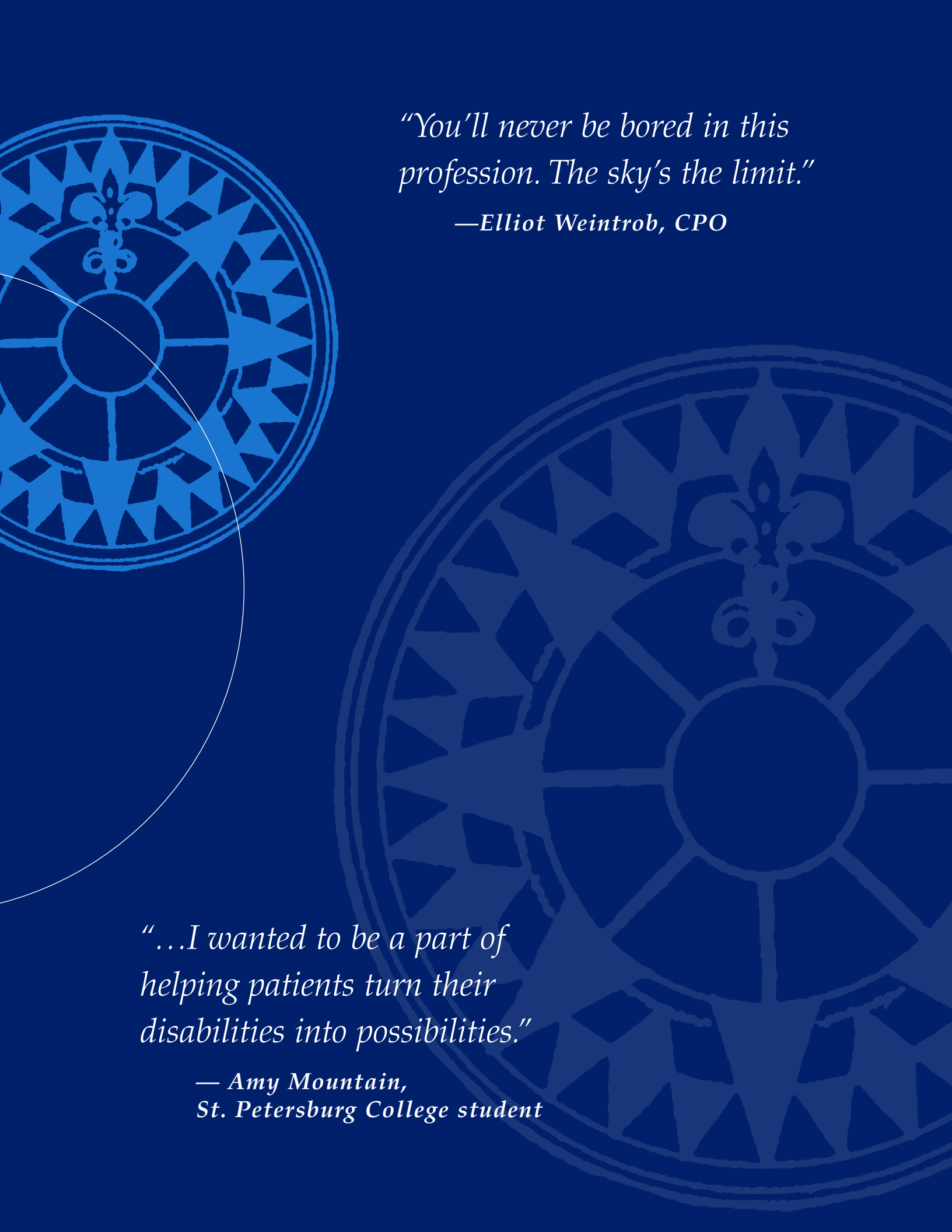




American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists



Make a Career of Making a Difference
www.oandp.org



"You'll never be bored in this profession. The sky's the limit."

—Elliot Weintrob, CPO

"...I wanted to be a part of helping patients turn their disabilities into possibilities."

*— Amy Mountain,
St. Petersburg College student*



Building Dreams

Exploring Rewarding Allied Health Careers in Orthotics and Prosthetics (O&P)

Imagine being an artist, a bio-mechanist, an engineer, a practitioner, and a friend. Imagine a career of making a difference. Being an orthotist/prosthetist is all of these things and more. An orthotist fabricates and fits custom-designed external orthopedic braces or *orthoses*.

A prosthetist creates, designs and custom-fits artificial limbs or *prostheses*. In addition to orthotists and prosthetists, the profession offers various career paths including O&P assistants, technicians and fitters. All are rewarding professions in great demand throughout the country.

The American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists (The Academy) is the professional organization representing orthotists and prosthetists certified by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics (ABC). Additionally, the Academy's membership includes state-licensed O&P professionals, ABC registered assistants, technicians, certified fitters and other professionals affiliated with the profession of O&P. The Academy is dedicated to maintaining the highest level of professionalism and ethical standards as well as providing continuing education and promoting advancements in the profession. It has a long history of promoting high level education, awareness and ongoing research to enable those in O&P to provide superior patient care.

The Academy also informs the general public about the exciting careers available in the profession – a profession where you can “make a career of making a difference” in the lives of those who need orthopedic braces and artificial limbs. This brochure has been developed so that people can learn more about the profession. It explains what education and training is required when one enters the O&P profession and highlights the emotional and financial rewards of helping people fulfill their dreams.

The Academy has developed a national network of O&P professionals willing to answer any specific questions about O&P careers or schooling. To “Talk to an O&P Professional” in any area of the country visit the link on the O&P careers website at www.opcareers.org.

No Limits

The Roles of an Orthotist and Prosthetist

Orthotists and prosthetists are integral members of the health care and rehabilitation team. Their unique expertise in patient assessment, design and materials offers patients increased or full mobility and independence. While there are some specialty areas, most professionals treat everyone from children to seniors.

The other exciting employment opportunities in O&P are listed below.

O&P Assistant

- Supports the O&P practitioner
- Under guidance, performs procedures and patient-related tasks
- Fabricates, repairs and maintains devices
- Adjusts devices for best fit, function and appearance

Orthotic Fitter

- Participates in the fitting and delivery of pre-fabricated orthotic devices

Mastectomy Fitter

- Participates in the fitting and delivery of breast prostheses and mastectomy products and services

Therapeutic Shoe Fitter

- Provides non-custom therapeutic shoes and non-custom diabetic multi-density inserts

Technician

- Provides technical support and implementation tasks for patient care
- Fabricates, repairs and maintains devices

Professionals say some of the highlights of a career in O&P are the diversity of skills they use, the flexibility of their work schedules, the bond they form with their patients, and the financial security a career in O&P can bring to them and their families. There is also the unquantifiable reward of seeing their patients go on to lead exciting and productive lives.

In Demand

A Brief History

The study of orthotics began with the making of splints and braces. The field of prosthetics evolved and changed with each major war. After the Civil War the nation saw a growing need for artificial limbs and orthopedic braces. It was at this time that those in the field of O&P became recognized as health professionals. In 1948, the certification board now known as the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics was formed to set the standards for education, clinical knowledge and training. In 1970, the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists was founded with the mission of promoting professionalism and advancing the standards of patient care through education, literature, research, advocacy, and collaboration. Today, the need for well trained and certified O&P professionals is higher than it has ever been.

Now More Than Ever

The numbers tell a compelling story of an ever-increasing need for certified O&P professionals. An aging population, the dual epidemics of diabetes and obesity, heart disease, and the total number of people with paralysis, deformity or orthopedic impairment is expected to increase by 25 percent by the year 2020. The number of those in need of a prosthesis is expected to rise by at least 47 percent in the same timeframe. These dramatic statistics validate the need for more people to enter the O&P profession (Nielsen, 2002).

As we prepare to serve the growing number of patients requiring O&P care, the Academy is working to increase the number of qualified graduates from O&P schools.

What does this mean for someone considering entering the profession? It means guaranteed EMPLOYMENT for years to come.

Use Vital Skills

What Does It Take?

First and foremost, an ideal candidate has a passion to make a difference in peoples lives *every* day. O&P professionals find great personal satisfaction knowing they are rebuilding lives and helping patients reach their goals. No other attribute is as important as the strong desire to improve patients' lives.

Other qualities include:

- Strong interpersonal skills
- Problem-solving ability
- Aptitude for math and science
- Creativity and dedication
- Excellent hand-skills



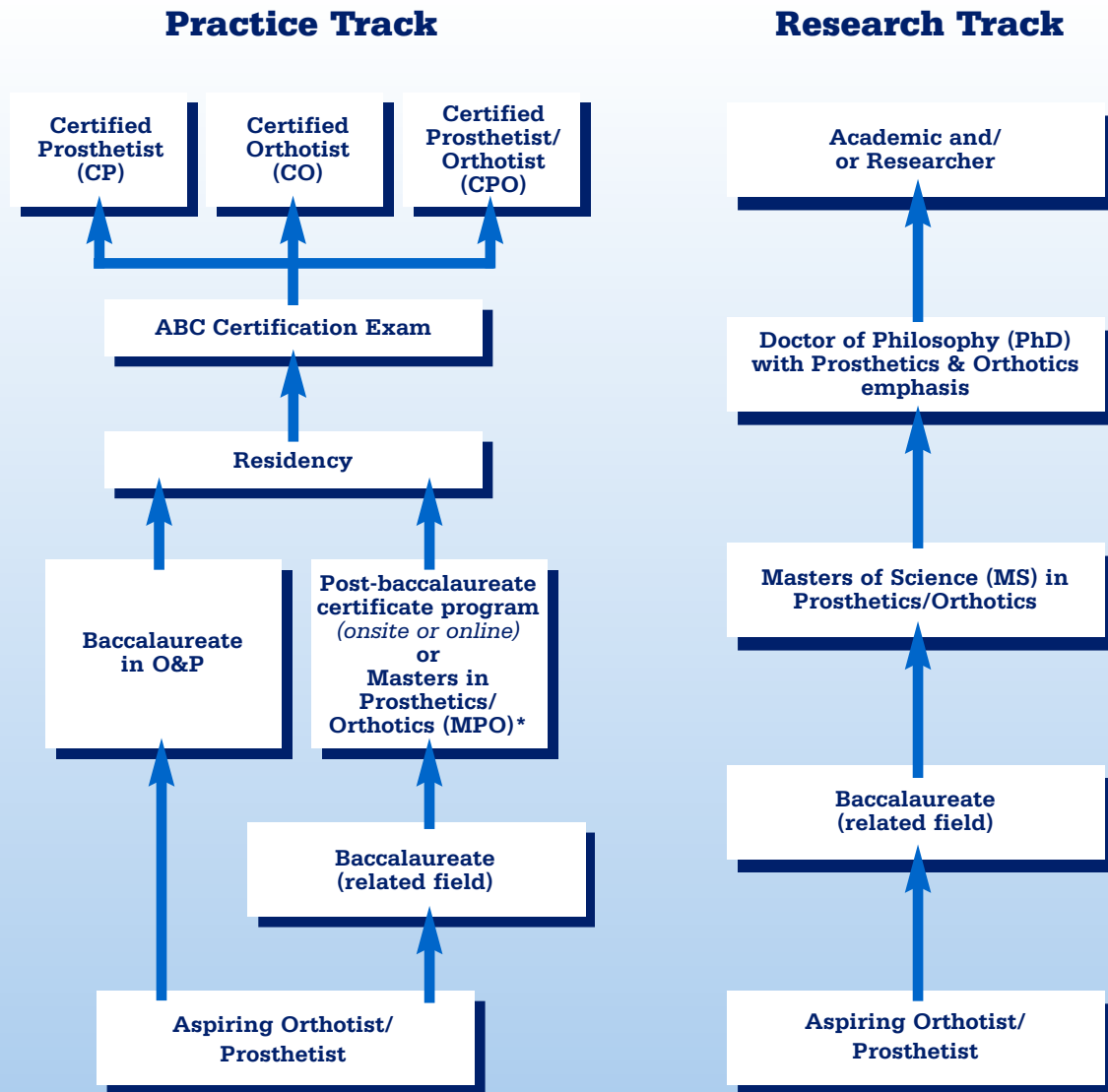
“When I was in a wheelchair I dreamt of running.”

*—Chase Baker,
Disabled Triathlon
World Champion*

Pursue the Dream

How to Become an Orthotist and/or Prosthetist

There are several education paths one can follow to become an orthotist or prosthetist. The practice track leads to the provision of direct patient care. Others may opt to pursue research or higher level academia. The chart below details these options.



**Note: There is a movement to transition the O&P entry-level education to a professional master's level program by 2010.*

O&P Practitioner Programs

There are programs and schools in every corner of the nation. For detailed information on a specific program or school, go to www.opcareers.org or visit the links below (use key words “orthotics” or “prosthetics”).

Programs as of Summer 2007

California State University
CSUDH Prosthetics & Orthotics Program
Aliso Viejo, CA
www.csudh.edu

Century College O&P Programs
White Bear Lake, MN
www.century.edu

Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti, MI
www.emich.edu

Georgia Institute of Technology
MSPO Program - School of Applied Physiology
Atlanta, GA
www.ap.gatech.edu

Northwestern University
Prosthetic-Orthotic Center
Chicago, IL
www.nupoc.northwestern.edu

University of Hartford/Newington
School of Orthotics and Prosthetics
Newington, CT
www.ncpschool.com

University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center
School of Allied Health Sciences –
Prosthetics-Orthotics Programs
Dallas, TX
www.utsouthwestern.edu/po

University of Washington
School of Medicine - Division of O&P
Seattle, WA
www.washington.edu

Developing Program
St. Petersburg College
St. Petersburg, FL
www.spcollege.edu

Orthotic & Prosthetic Technician Education Programs and Certification

To attain national recognition, the O&P technician must attain a high school diploma or GED *and* a formal technician training certificate from an accredited program *or* accrue two years of qualified experience under the supervision of a certified practitioner or registered technician. Successful completion of an examination is also required.

Baker College of Flint - O&P Technology Program
Flint, MI
www.baker.edu

Century College
White Bear Lake, MN
www.century.edu

Francis Tuttle Technology Center
Oklahoma City, OK
www.francistuttle.com

Spokane Falls Community College
Spokane, WA
www.spokanefalls.edu

Fitter Training and Certification *

To attain ABC certification an Orthotic Fitter must complete an NCOPE-approved orthotic fitter education program, have 1,000 hours of orthotic fitting experience, and successfully pass a certification exam.

To attain ABC certification a Mastectomy Fitter must complete an NCOPE-approved mastectomy fitter education program, have 500 hours of mastectomy fitting experience, and successfully pass the certification exam.

For the list of the latest NCOPE-approved fitter training courses, visit www.ncope.org.

**Note: Beginning with Spring 2008, to attain national certification a Therapeutic Shoe Fitter must complete an NCOPE-approved therapeutic shoe fitter education program, have 500 hours of therapeutic shoe fitting experience, and successfully pass a certification exam. Prior to Spring 2008 the examination requirement is waived.*

Frequently Asked Questions

► How long does it take to get certified as an orthotist or prosthetist?

After completing the education to become an orthotist or prosthetist, a one year residency per discipline is required before the certification exam can be taken.

► Are scholarships available?

Some of the O&P schools may offer scholarships. The Academy offers scholarships through its O&P Educational and Development Fund for students currently enrolled in an O&P practitioner baccalaureate program (up to three at \$1,000); a certificate program (one at \$1,000); and a technician program (one at \$500). Learn more at www.opcareers.org.

► Is it possible to work full-time while training?

Although it can be quite challenging to attain an O&P education while juggling a full-time career, several O&P schools have implemented programs to make this easier. Distance and blended learning programs are tailored to those who will be holding a job while going to school. Students may be required in some instances, to combine online work and home studies with focused clinical experiences on campus. Please visit the "O&P Education Programs" section of www.opcareers.org for the latest information on online education options.

► How can one acquire real life experience working in an O&P setting by job shadowing, interning, volunteering, etc.?

Visit www.opcareers.org. On the homepage there is a link to "Talk to an O&P Professional in Your Area" where there is a listing of O&P professionals in all areas of the country willing to answer questions or provide opportunities to come in and see them at work.



► **Where do practitioners work?**

Orthotists and prosthetists work in a variety of settings including: private practices, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, specialty clinics, home health settings, and nursing homes. Opportunities also exist to teach at the primary or post-graduate clinical levels and/or engage in research and development.

► **What salary can be expected?***

According to the 2007 American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA) Operating Performance & Compensation Report the average compensation (base salary, bonus and commission) based on the following job titles is:

- \$89,334 for an American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics (ABC) Certified Orthotist/Prosthetist with an average of 15 years experience.
- \$43,786 for an ABC Registered Technician with an average of 10 years experience.
- \$36,693 for a Fitter with an average of five years experience.
- \$33,742 for a National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE) Resident with an average of one year experience.

**Note: Compensation varies based on many factors, i.e. geographic location, years of experience, and inclusion or exclusion of fringe benefits. Salary information for assistants was not included in the survey.*

► **Are there opportunities to enter the profession if someone is trained in a related field of study?**

Talking to an admissions representative at an O&P school of interest will determine the appropriate education and career path in O&P. Pre-requisites (sciences, math, psychology, anatomy, etc.) specific for each school may differ. The educational path will be impacted by current job responsibilities, areas of expertise, and educational background and training. After completing the education to become an orthotist or prosthetist, a one year residency per discipline is required before the certification exam can be taken. Regardless of one's background, experience interning or volunteering at an O&P facility is highly recommended. Many current orthotists and prosthetists have come into the field from careers in engineering, bio-mechanics or other allied health care professions.

*"I love to set my hours around the rest of my life, but still have a job that I adore."
— Wendy Beattie, CPO, FAAOP*

Related O&P Organizations

The American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics (ABC)

The American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics is the national certifying and accrediting body for the O&P profession. The public requires and deserves assurance that the persons providing orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic services and care are qualified to provide the appropriate services. It was on this basis that the ABC was established as a credentialing organization. Upon completion of O&P schooling and the related residency or work experience, one may apply to sit for the ABC exam to obtain certification.

The National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE)

The National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. NCOPE strives to raise the standards of education in the profession, develops standards for and accredits O&P programs, establishes accreditation and evaluation procedures, and aids in the development of new O&P programs. The organized O&P profession, including the Academy, ABC and AOPA work closely with NCOPE in a cooperative relationship to ensure those who enter O&P are receiving formal preparation related to the current requirements for professional O&P practice.

The American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (AOPA)

The American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association is a national trade association committed to providing high quality, unprecedented business services and products to O&P professionals and businesses since 1917. Through government relations efforts, AOPA works to raise awareness of the profession and impact policies that affect the future of the O&P industry. AOPA membership consists of over 1,900 O&P patient care facilities and suppliers that manufacture, distribute, design, fabricate and fit orthoses and prostheses.





Start Here

Take the first steps to a new and rewarding career

Contact careers@oandp.org for answers to specific questions about a career in orthotics and prosthetics. Visit www.oandp.org for more information about the profession and the activities of the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists.

"I saw a prosthetist help a patient stand for the first time after losing a limb. I have been in O&P ever since."

*— Andy Chambers,
University of Washington student*

“The field is a great mix of technology and healthcare. The mix of the two in the O&P profession helps people in incredible ways.”

— Benjamin Koch, California State Dominguez Hills student



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Orthotists and Prosthetists**

526 King Street, Suite 201
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.836.0788
www.oandp.org