

## APPENDIX I

### **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Request to Establish a Doctoral Program in Occupational Science**

#### **Introduction**

Following a recommendation from the Graduate Council and from the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs approved on November 13, 2003 the request from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to plan a doctoral program in Occupational Science. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill now seeks approval to establish a doctoral program in Occupational Science (CIP: 51.2306) effective August 2005.

#### **Program Description**

The institution describes the new program as follows:

The Division of Occupational Science is one of seven Divisions in the Department of Allied Health Sciences within the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill). At present, the Division offers a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy, a degree that leads to eligibility for a national certification examination for entry into professional practice in occupational therapy. *Occupational therapy*, the health profession, is focused on the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations) to promote optimal development, health, and quality of life in individuals and groups. *Occupational science*, the academic discipline, is dedicated to the study of people's occupational engagements and how various experiences or patterns of engagement influence development, health, and quality of life across the lifespan. Accordingly, occupational science is uniquely suited to generating new knowledge to influence and guide the practice of occupational therapy. The new doctoral degree (Ph.D.) in occupational science is needed for the following reasons:

- To address critical shortages of doctoral prepared faculty in occupational therapy educational programs in the state, nation, and internationally;
- To nurture a future cadre of researchers committed to studying the relationship of occupations to development, competent daily functioning, health, and quality of life across the life span;
- To promote applications of research to all practices in occupational therapy and, thereby, evidence-based practices; and
- To enhance interdisciplinary understandings of the nature of engagement in everyday activities and how these experiences influences human health and well-being.

The new program offering a Ph.D. in Occupational Science will accept academically qualified applicants who have completed master degrees in occupational therapy, relevant social and behavioral sciences, or related health fields. This program will require 54 credits and include content in four domains: (a) occupational science, (b) an interdisciplinary cognate area that complements occupational science, (c) research design and methodology, and (d) competencies for an academic career. The course of study will culminate in a doctoral dissertation that generates new knowledge in occupational

science. Graduates with this academic degree will be prepared to: (a) generate new knowledge in occupational science, (b) teach professional courses about the therapeutic use of occupation from a base of knowledge in occupational science, (c) synthesize interdisciplinary perspectives related to everyday activities with knowledge generated in occupational science, and (d) apply this rich synthesis of knowledge to promote the evidence-based practice of occupational therapy.

### **Program Review**

The review process is designed to surface strengths and weaknesses in proposed new degree programs. Proposals to establish new doctoral programs are reviewed internally and externally. The concerns from the two review processes were summarized in a letter to the Chancellor prior to the presentation to the Graduate Council. That summary follows:

*The two outside reviews are strong and supportive but with a lot of advice and suggestions for improving the proposed program.*

*Some of the issues that would merit further comment are the following:*

- *If the account of two faculty members leaving the program is accurate, what is the plan for replacement and how will that affect the planned program?*
- *What are the plans for the directorship of the new program?*
- *How would you respond to the questions raised about faculty load and the number of new courses being developed?*
- *How will the goal of being interdisciplinary be realized in light of the comments by Reviewer 1?*
- *Is the curriculum so defined that it will be difficult for student's interests in specific areas to develop as Reviewer 1 suggests?*
- *How would you respond to the suggestion of opening the program to part-time students?*

*Overall the reviewers seem excited about the new doctoral program in occupational science and expect it to become a leader in its field in short order.*

### **Graduate Council**

The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, the proposal to establish the program, copies of the outside reviews of the program, the summary letter to the Chancellor, and a presentation to the Council by representatives of the program.

### **Response**

The program has been authorized to fill a faculty position and the search is underway. The program leaders expressed confidence that, due to the reputation of the department, they will be able to appoint an outstanding scholar. The program's planning committee has reviewed the curriculum and now sees ways to utilize courses in related departments to reduce the number of new courses for the program, thus addressing the issue of faculty load. The program is interdisciplinary in many ways ranging from taking courses from

several departments to having an interdisciplinary committee for guiding the students' doctoral work and research. Students' varying interest will be accommodated in the program through electives, program focus and the research for the dissertation. The program does not plan to offer part-time enrollment.

### **Recommendation by the Graduate Council**

After consideration of the issues raised by reviewers and Council members, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval to establish this doctoral program in Occupational Science.

### **Need for the Program**

The focus of this doctoral program is to produce faculty for practitioner degree programs in occupational therapy. With a strong practitioner program UNC CH is in an ideal situation to produce needed faculty for the field of occupational therapy.

### **Resources**

The program will be supported by reallocation of resources and faculty time, external grants, and enrollment growth funds.

### **Recommendations**

One reviewer comments, "The Division of Occupational Science at UNC Chapel Hill has a national reputation within the profession of occupational therapy and occupational science as a highly regarded program with a well-articulate educational philosophy and curriculum at its current level....The proposal for a doctorate in Occupational Science is a well-organized and clear statement of the proposed doctoral program including rationale, professional scope, societal implication curricular and procedural details, resources, and educational needs being addressed."

The Office of the President recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to establish a doctoral program in Occupational Science effective August 2005.

### **Approved to be Recommended to the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs of the Board of Governors**

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**Senior Vice President Gretchen M. Bataille**

**November 2, 2004**