

APPENDIX I

Request for Authorization to Establish a Bachelor of Science Degree in Respiratory Therapy at UNC-Charlotte

Introduction

UNC-Charlotte notified UNC-GA of its intent to plan a BS in Respiratory Therapy degree (CIP 51.0908) in May 2006. UNCC requests authorization to establish the degree in August 2007.

Program Description

The proposed BS in Respiratory Therapy is a baccalaureate completion program for students holding associate's degrees in respiratory therapy and holding current and valid licenses as respiratory therapists. The degree program provides respiratory therapists with advanced and specialized skills, including management and patient education skills, that prepare them to assume professional roles in a variety of health care settings including acute and long-term care hospitals, rehabilitation centers, medical equipment and home health care companies, pharmaceutical companies, outpatient centers, and physician offices. Additionally, baccalaureate-prepared respiratory therapists can address faculty needs to prepare entry-level practitioners in NC's 13 community college respiratory therapy programs.

Program Need

Respiratory therapy has become a highly complex occupation, with respiratory therapists assuming greater roles in patient assessment and protocols in disease-state management; end-of-life and palliative care; smoking cessation and prevention programs; detection and intervention in chronic pulmonary disease; home care; and pulmonary rehabilitation. However, with less than a baccalaureate degree, respiratory therapists are often not recognized as professionals by government agencies, third party payers, and others. Baccalaureate programs are needed to provide qualified faculty for community college associate programs. Nearly half of current program directors and one-third of clinical directors and faculty will retire in the next decade. The number of respiratory therapists with baccalaureate degrees is increasing, and it is estimated that at least 50 percent of respiratory therapists desire to obtain a baccalaureate degree. There are currently no baccalaureate respiratory therapy programs in North or South Carolina. In 2004, there were approximately 3,300 licensed respiratory therapists in NC with only 15 percent holding baccalaureate degrees in any field, far below the national average of 32 percent.

Resources

One new faculty member will be needed for each of the next three academic years to be funded by enrollment increase funds. The program will be housed in the new College of Health and Human Services building, which has very adequate classroom, laboratory, and computer facilities.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the UNC-Charlotte request to establish a BS in Respiration Therapy degree (CIP 51.0908) in August 2007.