

APPENDIX O

Request to Establish a Doctor of Dental Surgery Degree Program at East Carolina University

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 in May 2006 the request from East Carolina University to plan a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree program. East Carolina University now seeks approval to establish a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree program (CIP 51.0401) effective November 2006.

Program Description

The educational mission of the Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) program is to prepare dental practitioners who will address the substantial oral health care needs throughout North Carolina, particularly in the underserved regions of the State. The DDS, a 5,034 contact-hour degree program, comprises six curriculum themes: foundation biological sciences, dental care foundations, clinical practice of general dentistry, community oral health and practice, assessment and treatment, and primary dental care in the community. Course work and clinical practice in these themes will prepare the DDS graduates to practice dentistry, follow a career in dental education, and design and conduct empirical research to understand the etiology, manifestation, and amelioration of dental problems consistent with the guidelines of the American Dental Association.

Students recruited for this program must possess a strong sense of personal and professional obligation and have a desire to build their careers in the rural environment. The curriculum of this first-professional degree program is designed for completion in four academic years, consisting of sixteen-week fall and spring semesters and an eight-week summer semester in years one through three (40 weeks per year), and fall and spring semesters in the fourth year (32 weeks) for a total of eleven semesters and one hundred and fifty-two weeks. Success in this degree program will enable the graduates to function as competent and contemporary general dentists as well as community leaders who contribute to the shaping of health care policy and services in their practice region.

The proposed DDS degree program will be offered through the East Carolina University School of Dentistry, one of four schools in the Division of Health Sciences. This School of Dentistry will be one of the first public dental schools established in the United States in the past forty years with an emphasis on serving the oral health care needs of rural America. The DDS degree supports the school's mission to improve the quality of oral health among the citizens of North Carolina by implementing community-oriented educational, research, and service programs that focus on prevention of dental disease.

The Division of Health Sciences is well positioned to develop and offer the DDS degree. The Division of Health Sciences at East Carolina University, particularly the Brody School of Medicine (BSOM), has been recognized for its success in primary care. The

U.S. News & World Report (4/3/06) magazine's annual listing of the best professional schools (4/3/06) ranked the BSOM in the top ten among medical schools in three categories that emphasize primary care. The Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University is

- Tied for sixth among primary care schools with Duke University, the University of Colorado-Denver, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, up from 34th in 2005.
- Ranked 9th in family medicine, up from 11th in 2005.
- Tied for 7th in rural medicine.

The DDS program will model the successful philosophy and delivery system used by the BSOM. As many as 75 percent of BSOM's graduating students in a given year have entered primary care residencies. More than 28 percent of BSOM graduates practice in rural North Carolina, which is over 50 percent more than the other publicly-funded medical school in the State. The ECU School of Dentistry will use an educational and clinical delivery system unlike those of traditional dental schools. It will not build large dental clinics in a central location (i.e., Greenville) and expect patients to come to these clinics. Instead, the school will build, acquire, or lease several small service learning centers of approximately twenty dental operatories in selected rural and underserved areas of the State with widely dispersed populations and limited public transportation. The School of Dentistry will form partnerships with community health centers and other dental safety net clinics for resident and student rotations. All of these sites will provide care to primarily low-income, underserved patients.

The educational philosophy of the dental school at East Carolina University has six tenets. The philosophy will be implemented through the curriculum goals and strategies described in the proposal to establish and through student recruitment methods that will target residents from rural and underserved areas who demonstrate a strong personal commitment to serving rural North Carolina as health care providers. ECU believe that

- A substantial portion of our students' learning experiences should occur in the types of communities in which they will be educated to serve.
- Graduates should be leaders in rural communities in the areas of health policy, wellness promotion, and education of the public and other health care providers.
- Students should be exposed to the challenges of serving populations with socio-economic, geographic, cultural, and other barriers that may limit access to oral health and other types of medical care.
- Students should have enhanced patient assessment skills beyond that normally associated with a general dentist because as dentists they will often function autonomously as a sole source dental provider in a rural region of the State.
- Graduates should be thoroughly trained in a wide range of dental therapeutic strategies in order to provide a full scope of oral health services within the framework of communities that have limited health care resources and few other health care providers to serve as a referral safety net.
- Graduates should understand the health care infrastructure and economic foundation of small communities so that they have the capacity and

resourcefulness to function effectively within this environment and to assume leadership roles in regional dental associations and other health care organizations.

The recruitment strategies and admissions standards of the School of Dentistry will be implemented in concert with this core educational philosophy. Student recruitment activities will focus on attracting academically solid individuals from the rural and underserved areas of North Carolina who have a passion for a professional career of service to the community. The recruitment strategy would include cultivating partnerships with undergraduate schools and colleges, including community colleges, and area high schools to identify and encourage underrepresented and other applicants to consider the school and a career in dentistry. This approach mirrors the successful method in place for admissions to the Brody School of Medicine.

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. In the case of this first-professional degree program in Dentistry, consultants' reports were secured and in addition a team of dental professionals was secured to review the broader Plan for Dentistry in North Carolina and the specific proposal from ECU to establish a new DDS degree program. The following is from the letter to the Chancellor regarding the program.

I think both the reviewer of the proposal to establish and the Review Team provided a very positive assessment of the proposal by ECU to establish a Doctor of Dental Surgery program. The external reviewer raised the following issues:

There has been a shortage of faculty for dental schools, which will be a consideration for ECU since it will need to hire a large number of faculty over a short period of time, though there is some indication that the faculty situation in dentistry is improving.

While the model for the fourth-year experience is endorsed, there was a question about how all the students would be rotated through the clinics and whether the full range of experiences needed in clinical dental education would be available.

The external reviewer raised a concern about the financial dimension of the education and service clinics and whether the positive educational benefits had a solid financial basis.

The reviewer also encouraged more attention to recruiting underrepresented minorities.

Nonetheless, this reviewer was very supportive of the proposal as well thought out and innovative.

The Review Team took a broader view since they were to assess both the overall Plan for Dentistry in North Carolina and to assess a specific part of that plan, which is the

proposal for a DDS degree program at ECU. They had access to the review identified above and two other consultants' reports on finances and Medicaid reimbursement.

This was a distinguished team which included the Dean of Dentistry from a school that has focused on community-based services; the Executive Director of the American Dental Education Association, the principal national organization of dental schools; and the Associate Executive Director of the American Dental Association, the principal national organization of practicing dentists.

The Review Team strongly endorsed the Plan for Dentistry in North Carolina and the proposal by ECU to establish a DDS degree program. They see the overall plan which involves both UNC-CH and ECU as a potential national model for addressing the range of dental issues facing not only North Carolina but also the Nation. Based on review and discussion they also endorsed the financial model on which the service learning clinics are based.

The Review Team applauded the plan for cooperation between the two universities and urged its continuation and further development.

Graduate Council

The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, the proposal to plan the program, a copy of the outside review of the program, the report from the Review Team, the original Plan for Dentistry for North Carolina, the summary letter to the Chancellor, and a presentation to the Council by representatives of the program. In addition to the issues raised previously, the following concerns were expressed by Council members: whether there would be enough students for the program in light of a decline of applicants for dental schools a few years back, and the attitude of dentist in North Carolina toward the plan.

Response

Representatives of the program described the process for developing the proposal and the needs in rural areas that the proposal was attempting to address. Prior to turning to the issues that had been raised, the representatives provided an account of how the curriculum had been developed using first an advisory committee with members from six dental schools, then drawing on 32 dental school faculty at other schools to develop the courses for the curriculum.

ECU understands that it will need to pay close attention to recruiting faculty, and has proposed some ways to effectively do this, including through cooperative arrangements with UNC-CH. The presence of a large medical faculty in Greenville should provide support that a dental faculty can be recruited. The fact that this offers some innovative features for dental education may attract some. There has been discussion of scholarship/loans that could be forgiven for service as a faculty member at one of the dental schools.

Representatives have prepared a plan that will have the majority of the time of all fourth-year students spent in the clinics. The planning all along has included other kinds of rotations to assure that every student will have the full range of clinical experiences needed to be prepared for dental practice.

The education and service clinics are an innovative way to train students and extend services to a large number of people who are underserved regarding their oral health. Since this is a new approach, the issue of financial viability have been raised. UNC contracted an expert on dental school finance, and an expert on Medicaid reimbursement to advise ECU, UNC, and the Review Team. Based on the consultants' reports and the review by the Visiting Team, the Review Team concluded that the plan for the clinics is financial viable.

ECU has had success in recruiting underrepresented minorities into medicine and, since the proposed dental school would use the same recruiting strategies, they are reasonably likely to have similar success.

Regarding the availability of students for a new dental school, one can turn to UNC-CH's experience with the class of fall 2006. They had 243 completed in-state applicants, of which 65 were enrolled, and the program estimated that approximately 175 of that pool were highly qualified. For the 81 slots overall, there were almost 900 completed applications. In addition, ECU will engage in a recruitment effort that will likely bring additional applicants into the pool.

While the two schools and UNC-GA have worked with the dental society to keep them informed, including an opportunity for the leadership of the North Carolina Dental Society to meet with the visiting Review Team, there is opposition among practicing dentists in North Carolina to the ECU proposal. In the same survey that reported that a little over half of the respondents were opposed to a new dental school at ECU (about 30% were for it, with the remainder undecided) the respondents indicated by three to one that "a disparity in access to care exists in NC." The survey also shows that three-quarters indicated they believe that there is "a maldistribution of the workforce in NC."

Need for the Program

North Carolina ranks 47th of the 50 states in the number of dentists to population ratio, and has a great disparity between dentists per 10,000 population in metropolitan vs. non-metropolitan counties, with 4.9 dentists per 10,000 in metropolitan counties and 3.1 in non-metropolitan counties. So North Carolina has a shortage of dentists compared to the national ratio of dentists to population overall and a significant imbalance between the metro and non-metro areas of the State. This is of particular importance in North Carolina since it is one of the most rural states with 85 of North Carolina's counties considered rural.

Approximately 22% of North Carolina children have untreated tooth decay in kindergarten and in 2004 only 27% of the Medicaid recipients in North Carolina visited a dentist.

Resources


The funding request for this program is for construction of a dental school facility in Greenville and the development of 8 to 10 educational and service clinics in rural areas of the State with a focus on the eastern part of the State but encompassing the western part of the State as well. Just under \$60 million would go toward the construction of the facility in Greenville and approximately \$30 million would go to build the clinic facilities in rural areas. The ongoing operation of the Dental program is estimated to be approximately \$15 million dollars but that is subject to refinement as the new degree program is implemented over a several-year period. The clinics are planned to generate a significant portion of their needed revenue and to qualify for federal financial assistance.

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 for East Carolina University to establish a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree program.

Recommendation

The General Administration recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from East Carolina University to establish a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree program.

Approved to be Recommended for Establishment to the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs

Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Harold Martin

November 3, 2006