

APPENDIX F

Request for Authorization to Establish a Master of Science Physician Assistant Degree at East Carolina University

Introduction

East Carolina University notified the UNC Office of the President of its intent to plan a Master of Science Physician Assistant degree (CIP# 51.0912) on May 24, 2002. The university requests authorization to establish the program in May 2003.

Program Description

The proposed program will educate individuals as entry-level providers of cost-effective health care who, with physician supervision, will provide primary health care to North Carolina residents. This program, to be housed in the School of Allied Health Sciences, will move the present successful undergraduate physician assistant program to the master's level in keeping with recommendations from the Association of Physician Assistant Programs. At the master's level, students will receive more in-depth basic science instruction, more case studies, and more clinical work. Most basic science instruction will take place in the Brody School of Medicine. The clinical portion of the program, which will also occur in the Brody School of Medicine, consists of seven required rotations and two electives. Students will be prepared to pass the Physician Assistant National Certification Examination, a prerequisite for licensure as a physician assistant.

Program Need

Mid-level health care providers, such as physician assistants, are needed in North Carolina to meet needs in rural and medically underserved areas where physicians may be scarce. The current undergraduate program only accepts North Carolina residents, and special efforts are made to recruit minority and rural state residents. No other physician assistant program exists in the UNC system, although three private institutions (Duke, Wake Forest, Methodist) have programs that largely enroll non-NC residents. Over the last four years, the undergraduate program has received an average of 130 applications from NC residents, and it is anticipated that ongoing enrollment will be approximately 44 students (30 full-time, 14 part-time), an enrollment comparable to the current undergraduate enrollment.

Resources

New funding will come from enrollment increase funds, external grants, internal reallocations; no other state funds are requested. Current courses will be upgraded for graduate instruction, and current faculty numbers and facilities are adequate for the program.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the request to establish a Master of Science Physician Assistant degree at East Carolina University effective May 2003.