

Request to Establish a Doctoral Program in Physical Therapy at Winston-Salem State 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 a request from Winston-Salem State University on November 12, 2009 to plan a doctoral program in Physical Therapy. Winston-Salem State University now seeks approval to establish a doctoral program in Physical Therapy (CIP: 51.2308)

Special Note

WSSU currently has a Masters in Physical Therapy degree program. That is the current entry level for practicing physical therapy in the U.S. The profession is poised to make the doctorate in physical therapy the entry level degree for the profession. In 2000 the House of Delegates of the American Physical Therapy Association approved a vision statement that included the following: “By 2020, physical therapy will be provided by physical therapists who are doctors of physical therapy....” With unprecedented speed, universities across the country have been moving their programs to the doctoral level, so that now only a handful of the more than 200 programs in the country remain at the master’s level. The accrediting entry for physical therapy is now planning to make doctoral level preparation an accreditation requirement for entry into the profession.

This means WSSU’s masters of physical therapy cannot continue as currently constituted. It will have to be elevated to the doctoral level or it will have to be discontinued.

UNC has doctoral programs in physical therapy at ECU and UNCCH, and master’s programs at WCU and WSSU.

Program Description

The WSSU DPT will require a core curriculum of 119 credit hours along with 36 weeks of clinical education over three years. Students will also be responsible for participating in community clinical practice and focused research experiences. Electives in areas of student and faculty interest will be offered throughout the curriculum. The curricular model is built around social responsibility, cultural competence, professionalism and ethics. WSSU DPT graduates will be autonomous practitioners who are leaders and educators and who embody the WSSU motto, “Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve.” The core values of social responsibility, cultural competency, professionalism and ethics are inculcated within our curriculum as the student moves from the classroom to the laboratory and from the community to the clinic. Holistic and scientific methods as well as clinical and research skills ultimately culminate in the graduate who demonstrates evidence-based practice outcomes.

The WSSU DPT program will enjoy the support of the School of Health Sciences and the experts that serve in other allied health and nursing programs along with experts in health administration that affiliate with the Masters of Health Administration in the School of Business. The WSSU Physical Therapy Department has a long history of collaboration with Wake Forest University School of Medicine and currently shares two multi-million dollar teaching and research facilities. Faculty members from both institutions also collaborate on research projects and health delivery

services in the community. As a result of these human and capital assets, WSSU Physical Therapy is well poised to deliver a DPT degree.

Since the inception of the Masters of Physical Therapy program in 2000, the enrollment has grown over 530% with ethnic minorities composing between 20-55% of the cohorts. The program has a strong record of minority recruitment, retention and graduation. The program graduates are also successful on the national boards with an overall pass rate of 95%. The program has also established a national reputation in simulation training and was the first to fully integrate human patient simulation across the curriculum. The program is poised to introduce the first rehabilitation focused serious medical game to the national physical therapy education community and research infrastructure has been built to sustain a number of ongoing and proposed grants. Given the success of the program along with well qualified and nationally known faculty scholars, WSSU has the resources to offer a DPT.

The educational objectives listed below are consistent with national standards and best practices in physical therapy education as set forth by CAPTE, the accrediting body for the profession.

Graduates of the WSSU DPT Program will:

1. Practice autonomously as professionally competent, consistently ethical, and culturally-sensitive physical therapist clinicians;
2. Make sound professional judgments consistent with the best available evidence and moderated by patient circumstances and preferences;
3. Address the physical therapy-related health and wellness needs of individuals, groups, and communities by using appropriate strategies and technologies;
4. Communicate effectively with multiple populations, addressing their unique needs and respecting individual and cultural differences;
5. Accept responsibility for continual, life-long, critical assessment of one's practice methodologies, personal growth, and professional development;
6. Actively pursue positions of leadership in the healthcare arena by addressing health disparities and the needs of the medically underserved;
7. Proactively assume roles of educator, mentor, researcher, peer-reviewer and consultant;
8. Collaborate with health professionals in the management and administration of systems for patient care and community health;
9. Manage resources to achieve goals of the practice setting and facilitate cost-effective healthcare;
10. Advocate for the life-long health and welfare of clients, the profession, and the public.

UNC Tomorrow Relevance

This request fits with the recommendation in 4.5.2 that UNC should education more health professionals to meet the health needs in North Carolina. Physical Therapy is an area that will experience more demand for services particularly as the population ages. Nationally the US Labor department expects employment of physical therapist to grow by 27% between 2006 and 2016. In the state WSSU has played an important role in providing physical therapist for the upper piedmont and western areas of the state. With the current level of production, physical therapy has the most vacancies of any allied health area and the second highest percentage of vacancies in North Carolina. To discontinue this program would reduce the pool to meet the established need in NC.

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 first reviewer provides a positive assessment of the curriculum and of the faculty for delivering the curriculum. This reviewer confirms that there is an adequate supply of students for the proposed program and that opportunities for graduates will remain good. The reviewer also comments on the diverse pool of students the program is able to attract.

While the reviewer thinks the size of the faculty is adequate to start the new program, the review recognizes that faculty number have to grow to fully support the new program. A question is raised about recruiting additional faculty since there appears to be a shortage of faculty in the field. The reviewer suggests that this will need to be attended to and carefully planning will be required to achieve the goal of additional faculty.

The reviewer finds no problems with space and equipment for the program.

Graduate Council

The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, the proposal to plan 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. In addition to the issues raised previously, the following concerns were expressed by Council members:

The issues raised include the number of additional faculty and how they would be funded, what the status was with Commission on Colleges of SACS's accreditation process, whether the graduate school was organized to support the program,

Response

Representatives of the program gave a thorough overview of the proposed program. They expect when fully ramped up the program will need four additional faculty and they expect the funding to come from enrollment growth. They have provided all needed information to SACS and SACS is awaiting notification of program approval to initiate any needed review. Specialized accreditation will continue since masters and doctoral programs are accredited based on the same standards. The graduate school has been very supportive of the program. The representatives emphasized the clinical work they are providing in the community surrounding WSSU and their success in drawing minorities into the field. The program is using electronic tools to assist with student learning. They have both a virtual hospital and some software gaming programs directed to physical therapy.

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 Winston-Salem State University to establish a doctoral program in Physical Therapy.

Need for the Program

Evidence suggests that there will be a growing need for physical therapist as the population ages. The key question for Winston-Salem State's program is that it needs to move to the doctoral level just to continue to contribute the number of graduates that are currently entering the health care workforce. An additional feature of the program is the success that it has had in recruiting and graduating students with diverse backgrounds. We not only need to preserve this contribution but need to expand it.

Resources

Since the program has been in existence for many years at the master's level and since the need to transform to the doctoral level has been known for several years there has been a gradual transformation of the program toward a doctoral level. Equipment and Library resources are adequate for doctoral level work and clinical sites have been developed by the program. The program believes it can start up the doctoral program with its eight current faculty members, however, over time it would expect to add three faculty members and some specialized adjuncts.

Since the doctoral program will replace the master's program all the resources currently committed to the master's program can be shifted to the proposed doctoral program. Contact and grant support is currently at \$270,000. Jointly with Wake Forest University, WSSU has established a 2,000 sq. ft. state of the art Human Performance and Biodynamics Laboratory in WFU's department of surgical services which will be available for doctoral students in physical therapy. The addition of one year to the program and the move to doctoral status will increase state funding for the program.

State funding is based on the change of enrollment by discipline, by level (undergraduate, masters, doctoral) and by resident status. By moving to the doctoral level a year will be added to the program and the funding will be based on those additional students and doctoral level course work rather than master's level course work. Based on a projected annual enrollment of 90 (30 in each of three classes) students when the program is fully ramped up, this proposed program would generate an estimated \$780,000 in new state support when fully ramped up. This is above the current level of state support for the masters program in physical therapy. This is calculated at the largest enrollment the program expects to achieve and with the assumption that all the course work would be in doctoral level courses. If it does not reach that level of enrollment or there are a mixture of master's level course work in the program then the state funding generated would be lower.

Recommendation

The staff of the General Administration recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from Winston-Salem State University to establish a doctoral program in Physical Therapy subject to availability of funding.

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



Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

March 29, 2010