

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Request to Plan a Doctoral Program in Occupational Science

Introduction

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill requests approval to plan a doctoral program in Occupational Science (CIP: 51.2306).

Program Description

The institutions provided the following description of the program:

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 provides graduates with eligibility to sit for a national certification examination for entry into professional practice in occupational therapy.

Need for a Ph.D. in Occupational Science

A new doctoral degree (Ph.D.) in occupational science is needed for the following reasons:

1. To address critical shortages of doctoral prepared faculty in occupational therapy academic programs in the state, nation, and internationally;
2. To nurture a future cadre of researchers committed to studying the relationship of everyday activities (occupations) to development, competent daily functioning, health, and quality of life across the life span;
3. To promote applications of research to all practices in occupational therapy and, thereby, evidence-based practices; and
4. To enhance interdisciplinary and global understandings of the importance of everyday activities to health and well being.

As indicated by letters of support from our sister institutions in the state, from the Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Southern California, and from international colleagues, there is tremendous interest in future faculty and research programs in occupational science.

Program Description and Educational Objectives

This new Ph.D. in Occupational Science at UNC-Chapel Hill will accept academically qualified applicants who have completed masters degrees in occupational therapy, relevant social and behavioral sciences, or related health fields. The doctoral program will include content in four domains: (a) occupational science, (b) an interdisciplinary cognate area, (c) research design and methodology, and (d) curriculum development and pedagogy in occupational therapy and occupational science. 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 from a base of knowledge in

occupational science, and (c) synthesize interdisciplinary perspectives related to everyday activities and apply these perspectives as well as knowledge generated in occupational science to promote the evidence-based practice of occupational therapy.

Program's Relationship to UNC-Chapel Hill's Mission

UNC-Chapel Hill generates premier scholarship in social, behavioral, and medical sciences. The proposed Ph.D. in Occupational Science is consistent with the University's mission of advancing academic excellence. Occupational scientists graduating from UNC-Chapel Hill will contribute to global understandings of people's experiences in everyday activities and how these activities promote development, adaptation, health, and quality of life through the life span. This new knowledge will enhance evidence-based services, complementing the University's commitment to scholarly leadership in fields of study that lead to humanitarian ends.

Relationship to other Programs at UNC-Chapel Hill

As a social science that uses everyday activities as its unit of analysis, the knowledge generated by occupational scientists promises to have interdisciplinary relevance for scholars in other academic disciplines with complementary interests such as anthropology, nursing, psychology, public health, sociology, and social work.

Special Features Making UNC-Chapel Hill an Appropriate Place to Initiate the Program

An External Review Team appointed by the Graduate School of UNC-Chapel Hill to review the Division of Occupational Science in 2001 concluded that its existing program leading to a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy was among the strongest in the country and that great potential existed within the Division to develop a doctoral program (Ph.D.) in occupational science. Over the last 7 years, the Division's resources, grant funding, as well as interdisciplinary contacts and collaborations across campus have increased. These developments, coupled with the enormous resources that support doctoral education across the UNC-Chapel Hill campus, have paved the way for the Division to offer a new Ph.D. in Occupational Science while sustaining the high quality of its professional program (M.S.) in occupational therapy.

Program Review

The review process for requests to plan is designed to determine if the proposal is developed to the stage appropriate for taking to the Graduate Council and if so what are the issues that may need further attention. Proposals to plan doctoral programs are reviewed internally. The concerns from the reviewers were summarized in a letter to the Chancellor prior to the presentation to the Graduate Council. That summary follows:

The proposal reflects several years of planning and significant collaboration both within the institution and with other programs in the discipline. The internal review process did not identify any issues that need further elaboration at this point.

Graduate Council

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

Response

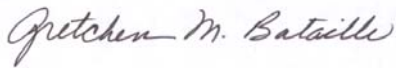
Program representatives reviewed the main components of the program and reiterated the need for research to inform practice in this field.

Recommendation by the Graduate Council

After consideration of the issues raised by previous reviewers and Council members, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to plan a doctoral program in occupational science.

Recommendation

The Office of the President recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to plan a doctoral program in occupational science.

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

Senior Vice President Gretchen M. Bataille

November 3, 2003