

APPENDIX Q

Request to Establish a Doctoral Program in Health Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte

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 on September 10, 2004 the request from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to plan a doctoral program in Health Psychology. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte now seeks approval to establish a doctoral program in Health Psychology (CIP: 42.2301) effective August 2005.

Program Description

The program provides the following description of the program:

Health psychology is an emerging field that seeks to understand the role that behavior and its physiologic concomitants play in the etiology, treatment and prevention of physical and mental illnesses, and in the promotion of health and wellness. To address the diversity of health issues of importance to the state and the region, and reflecting the strengths of the Department and the University, the program will have three primary areas of emphasis:

1. General Health Psychology will focus on the behavioral and psychological factors that contribute to the onset of illness, coping with illness, and compliance with treatment. Students in this area will emphasize theoretically based empirical research aimed at increasing understanding of the mechanisms linking psychological/behavioral factors to physical health outcomes such as disease, disability, and death. Graduates choosing this focus will be prepared to direct or conduct research in universities, medical centers, or private medical research facilities.
2. Clinical Health Psychology will focus on individuals with physical and mental health dysfunction and the psychological and behavioral factors that a) prevent these problems from developing, b) improve mental health and wellness, or c) contribute to the treatment of the dysfunctions. A particular emphasis will be on the development, implementation, and evaluation of new systems of care that involve multiple professional disciplines (e.g., psychology, psychiatry, social work, special education, nursing, health education) working in teams with families and informal community supports (e.g., communities of faith, nonprofit organizations) to improve the health outcomes of individuals and families. These students will be eligible for licensure as health service providers, and can assume positions in mental health or medical centers, universities, private practice, or other applied settings.

3. Community Health Psychology will emphasize the social and community factors that lead to healthy outcomes in individuals and interventions in community systems that create stronger, healthier communities. Students with this emphasis could specialize in the macro-level efforts to bring about changes in systems or environments that can affect the health and well-being of individuals and families. Graduates choosing this emphasis will be prepared to assume positions in universities or in settings that require skills in applied research (e.g., program evaluation) and/or community intervention.

The Interdisciplinary Health Psychology program will train students who:
(1) develop strong research skills to enable them to be leading contributors to the science of health and wellness;

(2) obtain specific applied skills to enable them to use knowledge from psychology to better understand disease, dysfunction, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles;

(3) obtain educational training and supervised experience with faculty in psychology and in related health professions to enable them to develop an interdisciplinary perspective on health that they can apply to research and/or practice;

(4) gain experience in working with health practitioners from different fields to enable them to become active participants in and leaders of multidisciplinary teams that seek to understand and improve health and wellness across disciplines.

The proposed Health Psychology Ph.D. is an interdisciplinary program involving the Department of Psychology and the Gerontology program in the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Counseling and Department of Special Education and Child Development in the College of Education. In addition, it is expected that the program will develop collaborations with the College of Health and Human Services and the Public Policy Ph.D. program. The program has been identified in the UNC Charlotte Academic Plan (2002-2007 and 2004-2009) as a priority, consistent with three of its seven areas of emphasis: Health Care and Health Policy; Children, Families and Schools; and Urban and Regional Development. It builds upon the Department of Psychology's long history of graduate education at the master's level, and its leadership in interdisciplinary training and research. The program will benefit and derive benefit from the existing Ph.D.s in Counseling, Special Education, and Public Policy, the planned Ph.D. in Health Services Research, as well as existing master's programs in Gerontology and Nursing.

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 reviewers agree that there is an adequate pool of potential students for the program and that there will be ample opportunities for students graduating from the program. While there are some issues about the structure of the program, they find the curriculum to be in accord with what the field expects and to be innovative. Issues are raised about the program, which will have three tracks but with only one leading to licensure. This is related to recruiting to the tracks and the likelihood that many students may decide to change tracks so they can be licensed. It could lead to an issue of balance among faculty resources. Also the issue of accreditation, which was raised previously, is raised by one of the reviewers. The reviewer acknowledges that contact has been made with the accreditation body but is concerned that the general course requirements for accreditation are not sufficiently addressed in the proposal.

Both reviewers are concerned about the research level of the current program. One comments that a culture of funded research must be developed to support doctoral education and the other reviewer comments that the faculty and the curriculum look more like a practitioner training program than a research doctoral program. This reviewer recognizes the excellent reputation of the master's program but is clearly looking for a commitment to significantly increase research and external funding both among current faculty and through new hires who will bring strong research programs to the department.

Several issues are raised about the organization of the doctoral program and its relation to the existing Psychology Department.

One reviewer comments about the space available for the new program and wonders whether the program is planning for graduate students to have their own work space? Library resources are raised as an issue that needs more attention. Graduate student support is also an issue.

The issue of the balance among the three tracks needs attention since more students choosing the clinical track will put more pressure on finding more clinical sites. There could be continuing tension between faculty strengths and the choice of tracks by students.

One reviewer advises that more attention be given to the evaluation plans for the distinct tracks.

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. Council discussing centered on the issues raised by the reviewers particularly the issues of the organizing and managing the tracks when one involves licensure.

Response

Representatives of the program addressed the issues of tracks, and indicated they were aware of the need both to accommodate student interest and manage the tracks so there would be a balance between student interest and faculty expertise. Students will be accepted into a specific track and to change to a different track they will need to go through an additional admission process. Because of the longer time for licensure, and distinct admission requirements for each track, the program representatives thought this would not be a major problem. Some students want a research program and are not interested in licensure. The representatives described their contact with the accrediting agency, the American Psychological Association, and with the state licensing board, and indicated they will continue to consult with them as the program is implemented. External funding is growing and new faculty hires have had significant funding for their research. The department has 15 teaching assistants, for which doctoral students will have priority, and the graduate school will fund tuition for all doctoral students in the program.

The program will be housed in the Psychology Department and will have over 7,000 square feet of new space beginning next year. The representatives believe this will be adequate for the implementation of the program. The narrative for the evaluation plan was not well organized, but the representative assured the Council that all tracks would be evaluated in accord with the stated criteria and that there would be additional criteria for the licensure track. The representatives also comment that there should be adequate clinical sites available for their licensure track.

Need for the Program

The field of Health Psychology is separately recognized by the American Psychological Association and there is a consensus among the reviewers that there will be a good supply of students and good opportunities for graduates.

Resources

The program will operate in an already existing department and will mainly need additional faculty positions, space, and support for graduate students. The campus plans to meet those additional needs through internal reallocation, enrollment growth, and growth in extramural funding.

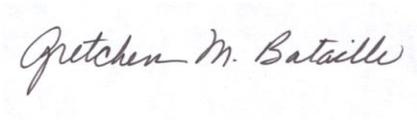
Recommendation by the Graduate Council

After consideration of the issues raised by reviewers and Council members, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval for UNCC to establish a doctoral program in Health Psychology.

Recommendation

The Office of the President recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from UNCC to establish a doctoral program in Health Psychology.

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gretchen M. Bataille". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Senior Vice President Gretchen M. Bataille

May 2, 2005