Agenda Item 2g

Program Proposal
Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science
Major in Public Health
USC-Columbia

Summary

USC-Columbia requests approval to offer a program leading either to the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health to be implemented in Fall 2008.

The proposal was approved by the USC-Columbia Board of Trustees at its meeting in December 2007. It was received at the Commission on Higher Education on February 11, 2008. The proposals was discussed and approved unanimously at the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs on March 20, 2008, with no substantive comment.

According to the proposal, the purpose of the program is to provide an undergraduate education with a general understanding of public health history, competencies, and issues; to require a broad liberal education with exposure to many disciplines in order to develop intellectual and civic capabilities; to instill a strong sense of values and ethics; and to develop the capacity to acquire new knowledge and abilities. The need for the program is related both to a growing national shortage of the labor force with understanding of public health and an acute shortage of persons in the state governmental workforce with this set of skills and knowledge bases. According to the proposal, a 1999 study done solely in South Carolina found that only 3.6% of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) workforce was academically prepared in public health, whereas a Center for Disease Control study done in 2001 estimated that 20% of such governmental workforces nation-wide had academic preparation in public health. State budget cuts in recent years and a relatively large proportion of state employees who are nearing retirement age exacerbate this need for more persons with public health backgrounds.

The program's two variants—i.e., the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science—have been developed in order to appeal to two different potential clienteles. The B.A. track is anticipated to be especially interesting to students considering careers in law or the social sciences, whereas the B.S. track has been developed to attract students who are considering careers in public health, medicine, and the natural sciences. According to the proposal and comments from University officials at the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs meeting of March 20, 2008, students graduating in either degree track will be prepared also to enter directly into the workforce in state and

federal agencies and nongovernmental businesses and agencies which deal with public health.

The program will be only the third undergraduate program in a public health field to be offered in the state, as well as the state's only generalist degree program in this field. Two public health programs at the undergraduate level already exist in the state, but neither of these is a generalist program. These two are Clemson's B.S. degree program in Health Science, and Benedict's B.S. in Public Health. Clemson's program has three tracks, none of which is generalist in its orientation. Benedict's program is offered by that institution's Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation and has a specific emphasis on the African-American population.

According to the proposal, currently, there are only two institutions in the United States with accredited schools of public health which offer *generalist* undergraduate programs in Public Health. These are the University of California at Berkeley and George Washington University. USC-Columbia's program would be the third.

Only one new course--an undergraduate offering in epidemiology--will be necessary to add to the catalog of the institution in order to implement the program. The curriculum for the proposed program will consist of 120 credit hours in either the B.A. or B.S. degree option. However, the configuration of course credits in number and type within the 120 hours will differ considerably for the two tracks. While both tracks will require the same 36 credit hours of coursework for the professional courses in Public Health, they will require different types and numbers of courses in the General Education component (40-41 credits for the B.A. and 62 for the B.S.) Likewise, the "selectives" (i.e., a category for student choice in certain general education courses of 30 credit hours worth of coursework in the social sciences and humanities for the B.A. and of 19 credit hours worth of coursework in the natural and social sciences for the B.S.) will be different in all but a few cases.

No additional faculty in the first five years of the program's implementation are required to offer the undergraduate program, according to the proposal, unless faculty retirements or resignations occur which would entail replacements. One (.5 FTE) administrator and two (.5 FTE) support staff will be added during the first five years of the program.

Enrollment in the new program is estimated at 18 (22.2 FTE) in the first year, rising to 66 (71.8 FTE) in the second year; 120 (137 FTE) in the third year; 174 (197.2 FTE) in the fourth year; and 256 (278.4 FTE) in the fifth year. If the student enrollment is realized, the program will meet CHE's program productivity requirements.

No additional classrooms are needed for the implementation of the new program during its first five years of implementation. No new physical plant requirements are

needed, albeit an administrative suite in the new Arnold School for Public Health will need to be fitted to the program's needs. Standard administrative equipment for the program's administration will be ordered.

At the current time, accreditation of public health programs is done only at the graduate degree level through the Council of Education in Public Health. The institution anticipates applying for accreditation at a time when standards for undergraduate program accreditation are developed. This event is likely to occur within the next five years. The curricula of these two undergraduate program proposal tracks are aligned with undergraduate Public Health program expectations as recommended by the Association of Schools of Public Health.

The institution states that library and learning resource services are available to students in online periodical databases containing thousands of articles or portions of reference books in full text. Many of these databases are made available through PASCAL. With over 3,500,000 volumes, the Thomas Cooper Library has achieved the 50th ranking among all research libraries in North America, according to the most recent preliminary rankings of the Association of Research Libraries. The core public health collection contains over 6,000 titles and swells to over 30,000 titles with related health sciences areas added to it. In addition, the U.S. Government publications collection, the School of Medicine Library, and significant portions of the social sciences collections will support the B.A. and B.S. in Public Health programs. Given the rich trove of library materials available already to support the B.A. and B.S. in Public Health, no additional funds for library acquisitions are contemplated by the institution in the first five years of implementation.

New costs associated with the implementation of these two program options are estimated to begin at $62,000 in the first year and rise to $64,500 in the second; $122,500 in the third; $125,000 in the fourth; and $127,500 in the fifth year. Costs will be attributable to program administration ($360,000); clerical support ($80,000); supplies and materials ($50,000); and equipment ($11,500). Total costs for the first five years for implementation of the B.A. and B.S. programs in Public Health over the first five years are estimated at $501,500.

Shown below are the estimated projections of new costs to the institution which are associated with implementation of the proposed program for its first three years as compared with the estimated revenues projected under the Mission Resource Requirement and the Resource Allocation Plan.

Year	Estimated MRR Cost for Proposed Program	Extraordinary (Non-MRR) Costs for Proposed Program	Total Costs	State Appropriation	Tuition	Total Revenue
Year 1	$269,441	$0	**$269,441**	N/A	$219,825	**$219,825**
Year 2	$932,122	$0	**$932,122**	$135,712	$759,218	**$894,930**
Year 3	$1,662,769	$0	**$1,662,769**	$469,838	$1,353,321	**$1,823,159**
Year 4	$$2,393,416	$0	**$2,393,416**	$838,403	$1,948,752	**$2,787,155**
Year 5	$3,378,941	$0	**$3,378,941**	$1,206,600	$2,750,007	**$3,956,607**

These data demonstrate that if USC-Columbia can meet the projected student enrollments and contain costs as they are shown in the proposal, the program will be able to cover new costs with revenues it generates by year three of its implementation

In conclusion, the proposed new program will be the only generalist undergraduate program in public health in the state and one of only three generalist programs among accredited institutions in the United States with schools of public health. The program will allow the state to grow its supply of educated professionals with a public health understanding, to enter into the world of work directly in public health-related businesses and agencies, to pursue graduate study either in the social sciences, natural sciences, or law, or to continue graduate professional studies in public health. The changes in demography in the country will demand more people with a public health background, including replacements for the many public health professionals who will be retiring in the near term.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commend favorably to the Commission the program leading to the Bachelor of Arts

degree or the Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health at USC-Columbia, to be implemented in Fall 2008, provided that no "unique cost" or other special state funding be required or requested.