

**New Program Proposal
Master of Health Information Technology
University of South Carolina Columbia**

Summary

The University of South Carolina (USC) requests approval to offer a program leading to the Master of Health Information Technology degree to be implemented in Fall 2012. The proposed program is to be offered online and through traditional instruction on campus.

The Program Planning Summary was submitted to the Commission on May 15, 2011, and reviewed and voted upon favorably without substantive comment by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs (ACAP) on July 14, 2011. The USC Board of Trustees approved the proposal on December 13, 2011, and the full proposal was received by the Commission on February 13, 2012.

According to the proposal, the proposed program will address the need for highly skilled health IT professionals due to recent changes in the health care system, including the transition to electronic health information. The proposal states that the proposed program will prepare students to plan, develop, implement, maintain, and manage clinical systems that collect patient data and support clinical process and decision making as well as technology systems used for the administration of hospitals, physicians' practices, and health insurance. The proposal states that the proposed program is needed because of the combined requirement for rapid computerization of health care information and the increase in demand for both health care and IT workers that will tremendously increase the need for health information technology professionals. The proposal states that the proposed program will prepare graduates to work in the changing health care environment by providing knowledge of both health care and information technology.

The proposal further states that many of the largest employers in South Carolina are health care companies. According to the proposal, data for South Carolina indicate there were 61,400 health IT jobs in 2009 and employment in this field is expected to grow faster than other industries. In addition, the proposal states that the *2010-11 Occupational Outlook Handbook* of the Bureau of Labor Statistics says health care jobs will increase by four million and account for 26% of all jobs in the U.S. by 2018. The *2010-11 Occupational Outlook Handbook* predicts that employment in computer systems design and related services will increase 45% by 2018 and the employment of computer and information systems managers will increase 17%. According to the proposal, wages of computer and information systems managers vary by specialty and level of responsibility, but the median annual wage of these managers in May 2008 was \$112,210.

Presently, there are no Master of Health Information Technology programs in the state. However, the University of South Carolina Upstate offers a Bachelor of Arts in Information Management & Systems/Health Information Management.

The proposal states that the institution anticipates enrolling 15 new students in the proposed program the first year and enrolling a maximum of 15-20 students per year thereafter. If enrollment and program completion projections are met, the proposed program will meet the Commission's productivity standards.

Admission to the proposed program will require that students meet the admission standards of the Graduate School of the University. The proposal adds that applicants should typically have an undergraduate grade point average of at least a 3.0 and a minimum score of 450 for the verbal and 550 for the quantitative sections of the Graduate Record Examination or the equivalent Graduate Management Admission Test score. The proposed program consists of 36 credit hours, including 15 credit hours in the core curriculum, and also requires a residency consisting of a minimum of 250 hours of approved health information technology experience. According to the proposal, the residency requires a research paper that will be evaluated as the student's comprehensive assessment of program learning outcomes. Nine new courses will be added to the institution's catalog, including: Telecommunications for Health Information Systems; Management of Health Information Systems; Health Systems Analysis and Design; Health Information Technology Usability and Interface Design; Project Management for Health Information Systems; Health Database Systems; Large Scale Health Information Systems; Health IT and Clinical Transformation; and Health Information Technology Residency.

Programs in Health Information Technology are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education. According to the proposal, the proposed program will seek accreditation during its third year when enrollment reaches 30-40 students.

The proposal states that the proposed program will be delivered by existing faculty from the Integrated Information Technology and Health Services and Policy Management programs, and that two new faculty will be hired to support the program. The proposal further states that the University is currently searching for a faculty member with health IT experience to replace a position vacated in June 2011. The proposal also states that no physical plant or significant equipment needs are anticipated for the proposed program. The proposal notes that through the Consortium for Enterprise Systems Management, IBM provided a very high end mainframe Z-computer, valued at over \$100 million, to the institution; this type of computer is used in the health care industry for large-scale transaction processing required by firms such as Blue Cross, Blue Shield. According the proposal, IBM's contribution is indicative of industry support for the proposed program and other technology programs currently offered by the institution. According to the proposal, library resources are sufficient because USC currently subscribes to a wide range of databases and journals and students have access to all major journals in health, health administration, and information technology. Students also have access to materials through the Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries (PASCAL).

Costs and sources of financing identified by the institution for the proposed program are shown in the following table.

ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEAR						
CATEGORY	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	TOTALS
Program Administration	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$65,000
Faculty Salaries	\$209,000	\$209,000	\$209,000	\$209,000	\$209,000	\$1,045,000
Graduate Assistants	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$270,000
Clerical/Support Personnel						
Supplies and Materials	\$2,250	\$3,250	\$4,250	\$5,250	\$5,250	\$20,250
Library Resources						
Equipment						
Facilities						
Other (Marketing and Miscellaneous)	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$30,000	\$180,000
TOTALS	\$320,250	\$321,250	\$317,250	\$313,250	\$308,250	\$1,580,250
SOURCES OF FINANCING BY YEAR						
Tuition Funding	\$122,850	\$245,700	\$327,600	\$327,600	\$327,600	\$1,351,350
Program-Specific Fees	\$24,840	\$49,680	\$66,240	\$66,240	\$66,240	\$273,240
State Funding						
Reallocation of Existing Funds						
Federal Funding						
Other Funding (Specify)						
TOTALS	\$147,690	\$295,380	\$393,840	\$393,840	\$393,840	\$1,624,590

These data show that if the institution meets the projected student enrollments and contains costs as they are shown in the proposal, the proposed program will be able to cover costs beginning in the third year and thereafter.

In summary, USC requests approval to offer the program leading to the Master of Health Information Technology. The proposed program will produce highly qualified professionals and leaders with expertise in both health administration and information technology.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commends favorably to the Commission the program leading to the Master of Health Information Technology degree at the University of South Carolina, to be implemented in Fall 2012, provided that no “unique cost” or other special state funding be required or requested.