

**New Program Proposal
Associate in Health Sciences, Major in Physical Therapist Assistant
Technical College of the Lowcountry**

Summary

Technical College of the Lowcountry requests approval to offer a program leading to the Associate in Health Sciences degree with a major in Physical Therapist Assistant, to be implemented in Fall 2006.

The proposal was submitted for Commission review on February 14, 2006. It was approved by the State Technical College System board on January 24, 2006. The proposal was reviewed without substantive comment and voted upon favorably by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs at its meeting on March 14, 2006.

The purpose of the program is to prepare graduates of the associate degree program at the technician level with the knowledge and skills to provide physical therapy services appropriate for patients as specified in the plan of care developed by a registered physical therapist. The need for the program is based on demand first identified by administrators at Beaufort Memorial Hospital and later verified by a formal survey of needs within the Beaufort region.

The program will consist of a total of 69 credit hours. Of these, 23 credits are in general education (of which one course of three credits is an elective), eight in anatomy and physiology, and 46 in core or supportive courses in physical therapy. The curriculum has been designed to meet the requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional accrediting body, and the Commission on the Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), the national professional accrediting body for this kind of program. A total of 15 new courses, totaling 46 semester hours, all in the professional field, will be required for the proposed program. All general education courses necessary for the program's implementation are currently offered by the institution.

The proposed curriculum is similar in content to that offered by three other technical colleges (i.e., Greenville Tech, Midlands Tech, and Trident Tech). These other institutions serve different geographical clienteles from the proposed program in the Beaufort region. The closest of these other institutional programs geographically is the program at Trident Technical College, located over 100 miles from Beaufort. Thus,

although this program duplicates the three others, its implementation will not constitute an “unnecessary” duplication of programmatic effort.

The proposal from Technical College of the Lowcountry indicates that two new faculty members (2.0 FTE) will be hired in the first year of the program. This faculty complement is anticipated to remain the same throughout the first three years of the program’s implementation. Faculty members will meet the regional and professional accreditation standards, respectively, for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Commission on the Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE.) The faculty member serving as Program Director must have at least a masters degree and must be a licensed Physical Therapist or Physical Therapist Assistant.

Enrollment in the proposed program is estimated to begin at 15 headcount (15 FTE) in FY 2006-07, the first full academic year of this program, and increase to 30 headcount (30 FTE) in FY 2007-2008 and thereafter. Estimates of enrollment in the first year are based on the documented need in the area. The College has a solid and growing body of students interested in a variety of healthcare-related careers. If enrollment projections are met, the program will meet the current CHE program productivity standards for enrollment.

The College will initiate the process leading to national professional accreditation for the program immediately after the program’s approval by the Commission on Higher Education. The granting of full professional accreditation for the program is anticipated by the institution by Spring 2007. Funding for the accreditation review process has been included in projected costs of the program by the institution.

There are no additional physical plant requirements foreseeable for the proposed program’s implementation during the first three years. Initial equipment needs are anticipated to be considerable. As part of a collaborative agreement, Beaufort Memorial Hospital has agreed to defray the cost of program operation through use of the hospital’s Physical Therapy Department. A total of \$66,536 worth of equipment for the program will be purchased by the College. Much of the cost for this equipment will be allayed by the College’s strong ties to the healthcare industry, according to the proposal.

The library has a strong collection supporting both the general education and professional components of the program. The library will require additional journals and materials in physical therapy, biomedical sciences, and related areas. The costs for these additional journals and materials is estimated at \$5,000 over the first three years of the program’s implementation.

New costs for the program are estimated to begin at \$142,536 in the first full year of the program's operations. In the second year that figure will decrease to \$64,998; and in the third year it will account for \$65,348. Total new costs for the first three years' of operation of the program are estimated at \$272,882. The categories in which these costs will occur are found in faculty salaries, clerical/support personnel, supplies and materials, library resources, equipment and accreditation.

The College has obtained commitments for equipment, clinical laboratory sites, and preceptors, as well as three years of funding for one of the faculty positions, from Beaufort Memorial Hospital. Savings to the College for the equipment donated by hospitals and healthcare vendors is anticipated to run \$20,000, in the first year only. An additional \$15,000 over the first three years of the program's operation is anticipated as a savings for using the space, maintenance, and utilities of the Beaufort Memorial Hospital for the program. The single faculty position to be assumed as a cost by the hospital is estimated at \$108,000 per year for each of the first three years of the program's operation. Although the College anticipates private sector funding for the faculty position and use of the clinical space to run for three years or longer, all clinical and teaching agreements with private sector units are annually renewed. Regardless of the level of funding from private sources, the institution is committed to making sure the program is adequately funded.

Shown below are the estimated Mission Resource Requirement (MRR) costs to the state and new costs not funded by the MRR associated with implementation of the proposed program for its first three years. Also shown are the estimated revenues projected under the MRR and the Resource Allocation Plan, as well as student tuition and private funds estimated for covering faculty salary, space, and equipment needs during the program's first three years of operation.

Year	Estimated MRR Cost for Proposed Program	Extraordinary (Non-MRR) Costs for Proposed Program	Total Costs	State Appropriation + Private Funds	Tuition	Total Revenue
2006-07	\$359,160	\$0	\$359,160	\$0+\$133,000	\$62,922	\$195,922
2007-08	\$604,440	\$0	\$604,440	\$137,922+\$113,000	\$105,886	\$250,922
2008-09	\$604,440	\$0	\$604,440	\$232,131+\$113,000	\$105,886	\$345,131

These data demonstrate that if Technical College of the Lowcountry can meet the projected student enrollments and contain costs as they are shown in the proposal, the program will not meet new costs with revenues it generates by the third year of its implementation. Still, the institution states that it possesses, and will direct, the resources to provide a program of quality in this field.

In summary, Technical College of the Lowcountry will offer an Associate in Health Sciences degree in Physical Therapist Assistant that will prepare students in the service area to meet the growing demand in this field in the Beaufort-Hilton Head area. No nearby institution will have the same program. The institution has indicated its ability and willingness to fund the program.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission approve the proposed program at Technical College of the Lowcountry leading to the Associate in Health Sciences degree in Physical Therapy for implementation in Fall 2006, provided that no “unique cost” or other special State funding is requested or required.