

**New Program Proposal
Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT)
Medical University of South Carolina**

Summary

The Medical University of South Carolina requests approval to offer an entry-level program leading to the Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree, to be implemented in Summer 2005. The new program will replace the existing entry-level Master of Science in Rehabilitation-Physical Therapy (MSR-PT) program. It will become the new entry-level (i.e., first professional) degree offered in this field by the institution.

The Board of Trustees approved the proposal on April 9, 2004. The proposal was submitted for Commission review on May 3, 2004. The proposal was reviewed without substantive comment by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs at its meeting on July 15, 2004.

The purposes of the program are to prepare graduates with excellent clinical skills and knowledge in evidence-based research as future practitioners in the field of physical therapy and to enhance the program's ability to attract research funding. According to the proposal, the demand for this program as the entry-level, first-professional degree comes from a growing national movement to make the DPT *the* entry-level degree for practice as physical therapists. The emphasis in the program will be on preparing students at deeper levels and with broader skills and knowledge bases in several areas of science and application related to the practice of physical therapy. The program is designed to be a research-based program, too, consistent with the mission of the institution.

The need for the program is based upon the perception of employers as articulated to the MUSC faculty and administration for graduates with additional skills and knowledge bases and the perception of MUSC personnel to maintain the competitive ability of the program to attract a talented pool of potential faculty and students. The number of openings for physical therapists in South Carolina is significant. National and regional labor market estimates consistently place Physical Therapists in the top tier for vacancies in positions among all health professions.

This degree is designed to provide students with an understanding of the latest knowledge to treat a number of client bases, including minorities and the older population. In addition, teaching objectives in traditional scientific areas of the curriculum have been updated and skill sets for clinically-based research have been included and/or upgraded.

Two issues about the need and relevance of the program exist, given the past history of the program's development and a similar program in the state. These issues are:

- Duplication of the program, given the authorization since 1996 of USC's DPT program. The degree titles and functions of the USC program and the proposed MUSC program will be the same and both will be first-professional degrees designed to turn out new practitioners with research skills. The USC degree was approved in part in response to MUSC's statement that the DPT at USC would provide a feeder for future USC faculty members.
- Raising MUSC's baccalaureate degree program as the first-professional degree for new Physical Therapists to the master's degree level in 1997. The request to shift the master's to the clinical doctorate level so soon after having made the first change is unprecedented for degree movement in South Carolina.

The USC program was approved in part because MUSC's institutional representatives at the time had agreed that the program was needed because of its uniqueness. MUSC had also stated that the USC program in the DPT would offer a professional base for recruiting faculty for MUSC's master's degree program into the MSR-PT. However, at this time, the USC program has only produced one class of graduates; no graduates in that cohort to date have been recruited to the MUSC program's faculty.

When the Master of Science in Rehabilitation-Physical Therapy track (MSR-PT) degree was approved in 1997, the program proposal narrative stated that it was in large measure a response to a national movement to convert entry-level baccalaureate programs in Physical Therapy to the masters-level. The proposal indicates that an even more recent national movement has emerged through the American Physical Therapy Association, the parent body for the national professional accrediting body for physical therapy programs, to convert masters-level to clinical doctorate programs in physical therapy. MUSC engaged a national expert as a consultant for this program proposal. The consultant agreed that the national trend is to create clinical doctorate degrees as the first-professional degree in Physical Therapy, and urged that the transition at MUSC to the clinical doctorate degree and nomenclature take place.

Despite these issues of programmatic duplication and the request to replace the recently approved masters degree with the clinical doctorate, the proposal's narrative suggests that the program differs substantially from the USC program. Its uniqueness is found in variations in content of the curriculum, relative emphasis on research, time to degree (four years at USC, three at MUSC), and MUSC's lack of a dissertation requirement. Nevertheless, both programs lead to the same degree and will teach the same knowledge and skills bases required to prepare graduates to pass the national licensure examination to practice Physical Therapy. Thus, the MUSC degree proposal is significantly duplicative of the existing USC program.

On the other hand, even if the programs are substantially duplicative, four reasons for raising the MSR-PT to the level of the clinical doctorate have been advanced by MUSC either in the narrative or in discussions with Commission staff. These include: 1) the undeniable national trend to promote realignment of the profession by making the clinical doctorate the entry-level degree for professional practice; 2) the ability to attract increased research funding to match the realignment; 3) the need for more physical therapists in South Carolina than both programs together can still produce; and 4) a desire to cooperate actively with the USC DPT faculty for improving best practices and research in the profession in the state of South Carolina.

The prerequisites for the DPT will be essentially the same as those for the present MSR-PT, except that the DPT will require a bachelor's degree to have been completed prior to matriculation. The curriculum for students seeking this degree with no background as licensed physical therapists will consist of 143 semester hours. Of these, two are new courses (in pharmacology and radiology) and a number of others will be reworked for content to meet modified learning objectives. In addition, the length of the clinical practicum has been extended from 24 weeks in the MSR-PT to 36 weeks. An abbreviated number of 26 semester hours of coursework will be required by students who are enrolled for the "tDPT" track (i.e., "transitional Doctorate of Physical Therapy"). Initially, students in the tDPT track must be students who have completed a masters degree in physical therapy from the Medical University of South Carolina. Eventually, the tDPT track will be available to students from institutions other than MUSC who have completed a masters degree program in physical therapy.

At the Advisory Committee meeting, MUSC representatives reiterated that the new program will require no new faculty members. All teaching and research faculty necessary for implementing the program have been hired over a period of the last several years. A total of 11 faculty (9.7 FTE) will work as the core faculty for this program.

Enrollment in the proposed program is estimated to begin at 60 headcount (115 FTE) in FY 2005-2006 and increase to 180 headcount (363.8 FTE) in FY 2007-2008 and thereafter. Estimates are based upon a capacity of 60 students per class to be admitted to the three-year program each year of its existence. The FTE figures are relatively high, because the institution anticipates that virtually all students will be full-time during their matriculation and that these students will be full-time during summer sessions as well as spring and fall semesters. MUSC officials indicated that students will cease to be admitted to the MSR-PT in Fall 2005 and the MSR-PT will be closed entirely after May 2007. If the enrollment projections are met, the program will meet the current CHE program productivity standards.

The program will be required to seek accreditation from the Council on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). Currently, the MSR-PT is accredited by CAPTE. This organization's mission focuses on the preparation and certification of para-professional and professional practitioners of physical therapy.

All physical plant and library needs for the proposed program are in place in the existing MSR-PT. Costs for the program are estimated to begin at \$353,866 in the first year and to rise to \$1,295,235 in the fifth year of the program's implementation. Total costs for the first five years are estimated by the institution at \$4,514,589, and include administration (\$611,713), faculty (\$2,916,900), laboratory instructors (\$34,300), clinical support/personnel (\$404,971), supplies/materials (\$286,144), equipment (\$223,736), and travel (\$36,825). All costs listed here as "new" are "existing" costs of the MSR-PT extrapolated into the new DPT.

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 five years. Also shown are the estimated revenues projected under the MRR and the Resource Allocation Plan as well as student tuition.

Year	Estimated MRR Cost for Proposed Program	Extraordinary (Non-MRR) Costs for Proposed Program	Total Costs	State Appropriation	Tuition	Total Revenue
2004-05	\$3,393,420	0	\$3,393,420	\$0	\$607,716	\$607,716
2005-06	7,303,230	0	7,303,230	1,051,998	1,308,633	2,360,631
2006-07	10,696,650	0	10,696,650	2,263,364	1,916,349	4,179,713
2007-08	10,696,650	0	10,696,650	3,315,363	1,916,349	5,231,712
2008-09	10,733,535	0	10,733,535	3,315,363	1,922,629	5,237,992

These data demonstrate that if MUSC meets the projected student enrollments and contains costs as they are shown in the proposal, the program will not be able to cover new costs with revenues it generates by the fifth year of its implementation. However, the institution is committed to covering these costs with research funding and other available institutional resources.

In summary, MUSC proposes to offer a program of study leading to the Doctorate in Physical Therapy degree that will be the second one of its kind in South Carolina. The program will replace the existing MSR-PT (Master of Science in Rehabilitation-Physical Therapy track) degree program as the entry-level first professional degree for the practice of Physical Therapy offered at MUSC. The faculty and administration at MUSC will have an ongoing dialogue with the personnel of the USC-Columbia DPT program to promote cooperation in coursework, research, and clinical education experiences. Approval of the program appears reasonable with the understanding that state funding for the program will continue at a level of first-professional degree programs, consistent with the current MSR-PT degree.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission approve the Medical University of South Carolina's proposed program leading to the Doctorate of Physical Therapy degree for implementation in Summer 2005, provided that 1) no "unique cost" or other special state funding be required or requested; 2) state funding for this program be maintained at the level of first-professional degree funding; 3) and no new students be admitted to the MSR-PT beginning with the implementation of the new program with the MSR-PT program file to be closed by May 2007.