

PROGRAM PLANNING SUMMARY

PROGRAM DESIGNATION

Name of the proposed program: Bachelor of Science in Exercise and Sport Science
(CIP Code 310505)

Academic unit involved: Spadoni College of Education
Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation

Proposed date of implementation: Fall, 2008

New Program or Modification: New

Number of Credit Hours in Program: 120 (Four Year Program)

JUSTIFICATION OF NEED

In 1998, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education approved the B.S. in Health Promotion at Coastal Carolina University. Since its inception, the health promotion major has been one of the fastest growing majors at Coastal Carolina University. In 2000, the university approved an option within the health promotion major titled "Sports Medicine." Enrollment in the option has grown steadily to over 90 students. The Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation also approved a "Fitness" minor in 2004 which currently enrolls over 30 students.

This proposal seeks to change the status of the current sports medicine option (and minor), within the health promotion major, to the major of exercise and sport science. Its revised and enhanced curriculum will better meet the needs of current and future students seeking careers and advanced study in the allied health care fields related the exercise/sport sciences and the fitness/wellness industry.

The sports medicine option was originally intended to meet the needs of students preparing for careers in athletic training. In 2004, the athletic training discipline adopted new curriculum and program requirements for programs leading to athletic training licensure. The degree program leading to athletic training licensure is not offered at Coastal Carolina University, and the current sports medicine option does not lead to licensure in athletic training. Current Coastal students in the sports medicine option increasingly hold career or advanced study aspirations in allied health care fields such as exercise physiology, cardiac rehabilitation, physical therapy, occupational therapy, personal or group fitness/wellness, strength and conditioning, exercise technology, or the sport sciences (biomechanics, motor behavior, sport psychology/sociology). The curriculum that best prepares students for career entry and advanced study is a comprehensive and broad-based exercise science program, which currently is not available to Coastal students.

The exercise, fitness and wellness industry is one of the fastest growing in the United States. According to the US Department of Labor (2005), overall employment in fitness and wellness is expected to grow faster than average for all occupations through 2012, as an increasing number of people spend more time and money on personal fitness, physical activity, and wellness services and more businesses recognize the benefit of exercise-based wellness programs. The Department of Labor projects the employment category of *fitness trainers, instructors, and leaders* to increase by 62.1% by 2012, making this employment category one of the highest projected increases. Local and regional trends support this projection. To support Horry County's high population growth, four new comprehensive health and fitness facilities have been built over the last five years, including the Grand Strand YMCA and the North Myrtle Beach Aquatic and Fitness Center. Several other agencies have significantly expanded their exercise-based services and facilities.

To meet the needs of this dynamic industry, specially designed exercise science degree programs in universities are common across the nation, and prepare qualified individuals for career entry to the field. Individuals in these programs are trained to meet the exercise-related health needs of target populations and the implementation of safe and appropriate programs within comprehensive health/wellness programming. Increasing numbers of undergraduate students are also seeking graduate or advanced study

in allied health care areas such as physical therapy, exercise physiology, biomechanics, motor behavior, cardiac rehabilitation, or occupational therapy.

Career opportunities for individuals graduating with degrees in exercise/sport science are numerous. Common career tracks range from the research scientist to the exercise practitioner in fitness and/or clinical settings. Opportunities exist in universities, community health agencies, club fitness (profit and non-profit), worksites (business and industry), medical settings (hospitals, clinics and health maintenance organizations), hotels, country clubs, government institutions, and recreational programs. Within the last decade, the industry has become more involved with enhancing quality of life for deconditioned, disabled, or older populations. Sample job titles include exercise physiologist, strength and conditioning coach, exercise leader, fitness instructor, exercise specialist (cardiac rehabilitation), physical therapist, occupational therapist, fitness program director, personal trainer, exercise technologist, and professor of exercise science. In addition, other disciplines find it helpful to include exercise science coursework in their allied health programs, such as pre-medical or pre-therapy programs.

The University embraces its public service role in this region, and the potential for civic engagement through this program is strong. For example, the newly developed Smith Exercise Science Lab at the university just began a "Community Fitness Testing Program," providing state-of-the-art exercise testing and prescription services to a variety of populations. The laboratory has the potential to engage both students and faculty in exercise testing and prescription for a variety of medical, government, public, private, or community based agencies. The proposed degree program is clearly aligned with the institutional mission of building on strong existing academic programs (i.e. health promotion) and providing research and public service in high demand areas indigenous to our community and region.

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM DEMAND AND PRODUCTIVITY

The exercise and sport science degree program will prepare students for entry into the growing field of exercise science and fitness. The demand for skilled, competently trained specialists in the field has become a responsibility of and a challenge for higher education. Many colleges and universities provide a specific curriculum and/or academic majors in the exercise sciences. Undergraduate programs are typically broad based and include general study in biology, chemistry, biochemistry, anatomy and physiology, biomechanics, exercise physiology, psychology, and fitness programming. Several indicators suggest the demand for this major will continue to be high.

First, enrollment growth in the existing sports medicine option (within the health promotion major) has been steady, growing to over 90 students in the option in 2006. The fitness minor, added in 2004, enrolls over 30 students. Anecdotal data suggest many of these students will seek the proposed exercise and sport science major when it becomes available.

Second, the growth of the sport and fitness/wellness industries nationally has attracted more students to the study of the sport and exercise sciences. With some 86% of CCU freshmen having participated in organized extracurricular physical activities in high school, CCU students are very exercise oriented. Approximately 2000 potential students indicate interest in the complementary fields of exercise/sport science (i.e. Wellness Studies, Leisure and Fitness Studies, etc.) from CCU recruitment regions. Current student interest in the allied health care professions (e.g. physical therapy, cardiac rehabilitation) has also heightened the need for specialized study in the exercise sciences (CCU Enrollment Planning, 2006).

Third, the national trend toward promoting physical activity, preventing overweight and obesity related illness, and reducing health care costs is projected to continue with increased emphasis. This should maintain or increase the need for qualified professionals and a variety of career opportunities. With the above indicators, a conservative estimate is that the exercise and sport science major will see steady enrollment growth over the next three-to-five years.

ASSESSMENT OF EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROPOSED PROGRAM DUPLICATES EXISTING PROGRAM IN THE STATE

Currently, three South Carolina public institutions offer a major in the “kinesiology and exercise science” CIP code (310505). USC-Columbia and Lander University offer a BS in Exercise Science, and USC-Aiken offers a BS in exercise and sport science. The private institutions of Anderson University, Coker College, and Erskine College also offer degree programs in exercise/sport science. USC Columbia and the Citadel offer graduate degree programs in exercise science. Other state institutions offer “tracks” of study in exercise science, sport science, or fitness/wellness. Institutions with such tracks (including The College of Charleston, Charleston Southern, and Winthrop) often house full degree programs in the related but separate curriculum of athletic training (leading to licensure).

Coastal Carolina’s exercise and sport science major is uniquely positioned to offer a pre-professional curriculum to students in a dynamic and growing industry, and in a geographic area ripe with employment opportunities. The major evolves out of existing and strong degree programs in health promotion and physical education and meets the needs of current and future Coastal students. The exercise and sport science curriculum will better prepare many students for advanced study in the exercise sciences and the allied health professions.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM TO EXISTING PROGRAMS AT THE PROPOSING INSTITUTION

The proposed program will interface well with other majors in the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. The curriculum will connect well with the existing majors of physical education, health promotion, and recreation and sport management. Exercise science coursework serves as foundational content for health promotion and physical education students. Students in these majors are also encouraged to share coursework or complete minors that advance their educational and career goals. For example, an exercise science major with a career goal of managing a fitness center might take supporting coursework from the majors of recreation and sport management, health promotion, and in outside majors such as business administration or economics.

The proposed program is interdisciplinary and requires courses in the science areas of physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology. A significant amount of curricular collaboration will occur between the proposed exercise science program and existing pre-medical programs in the department of biology, such as pre-pharmacy, pre-nursing, pre-physicians assistant, and pre-physical therapy. This collaboration within and outside of HPER programs will be encouraged and may expand as the program is revised to meet student needs.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS VIA INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

Coastal Carolina University and the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation are eager, where possible; to collaborate with other institutions and programs engaged in similar initiatives. The current exercise science faculty has established a record of collaborative grants and scholarly work with other exercise science individuals and programs.

TOTAL NEW COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED PROGRAM

Currently, the proposed program has one tenure track faculty member in exercise science and a second tenure track faculty assigned .5 to the program. There is a need to hire one new tenure track faculty member. New salary costs are estimated at \$50,000. Much of the library costs are already in place, with minimal cost to expand holdings over 5 years (approximately \$5,000) expected. No new or unique costs are needed for a laboratory-based academic support facility. The Smith Exercise Science Laboratory is a recently developed state-of-the-art instructional and research-capable laboratory. Its costs have already been absorbed by the university.