USF Board of Trustees
(December 5, 2013)

Issue: PhD Degree in Rehabilitation Sciences, CIP 51.2314

Proposed action: Approve implementation of PhD Degree in Rehabilitation Sciences, CIP 51.2314 at USF Health, Morsani College of Medicine, School of Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Sciences

Background information: Rehabilitation Science, as defined by the Institute of Medicine, encompasses "basic and applied aspects of health services, social sciences, and engineering as they are related to restoring human functional capacity and improving a person's interaction with the surrounding environment". “As such, Rehabilitation Science is an interdisciplinary field of study that seeks to understand the relationships among physiological and psychosocial causes, course and consequences of functional disability and how to improve health-related quality of life by enabling human function and performance. This field draws its body of knowledge from multiple disciplines spanning the physiological, health, and social sciences in order to approach the individual who lives with or is at risk of disability as a complete person with a full appreciation of the biopsychosocial environment in which that person functions”. USF Health SPTRS is uniquely qualified to offer an interdisciplinary PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences based on the interdisciplinary composition and extensive interprofessional experience of its faculty, curriculum, and research portfolio. The interdisciplinary focus of the proposed program on rehabilitation sciences will distinguish the program from more traditional PhD programs within the state and nation.

Overall Purpose: The purpose of the proposed PhD program is to prepare faculty researchers who will contribute to the development of rehabilitation practice, research and education in an emerging 21st century health care environment. Graduates of the proposed PhD program in Rehabilitation Sciences are expected to demonstrate advanced knowledge and productivity related to research, education, and service delivery through interprofessional collaborations designed to generate and extend knowledge that is focused and evidence-based.

Examples of employment opportunities available to program graduates: Faculty vacancies currently exist nationally (>300) in core rehabilitation disciplines e.g. physical therapy, audiology, occupational
therapy, athletic training, rehabilitation counseling, prosthetics and orthotics and chiropractic as examples. CAPTE, Physical Therapy’s specialized accreditor has documented that there are at least 267 open faculty positions in physical therapist education programs alone. In addition 40% of physical therapy core academic faculties are over the age of 55. (http://www.capteonline.org/uploadedFiles/CAPTEorg/About_CAPTE/Resources/Aggregate_Program_Data/AggregateProgramData_PTPrograms.pdf - accessed 4-19-13)

While these data are specific to physical therapy academia, similar faculty vacancies may be extrapolated to and found in other rehabilitation disciplines and frequently pose a barrier to new program initiation and institutions’ achieving or maintaining programmatic accreditation or expanding enrollments of existing programs to meet emerging societal needs. Human longevity has accelerated the need for scholars, researchers, administrators and policy analysts in rehabilitation sciences. We seek qualified students primarily drawn from the rehabilitation disciplines. This program’s goal will be to create a new generation of faculty with a broad perspective of enablement that can be linked to the economic development and betterment of the health and welfare of the citizens of our state and society. This program aligns with our USF System and Tampa campus strategic plans to achieve AAU status.

The Rehabilitation Sciences PhD program would align USF with other AAU institutions that have existing or recently established PhD programs in Rehabilitation Sciences, including both USF institutional and aspirational peers.

**Significant Policy Issues for the Board to Consider:** Under FLBOG Regulation 8.011 the USF Board of Trustees shall approve new research and professional doctoral degree programs for submission to the Board of Governors for authorization, in accordance with criteria outlined in section (3) of the regulation. In approving a new doctoral degree program, the Board of Governors shall consider the sufficiency of the university proposal evaluation process, the distinctive mission of the university, alignment with the State University System and university strategic plans, and the extent which the program will contribute to the economic development of the local community and the state as demonstrated by its alignment with the Areas of Programmatic Strategic Emphasis adopted as part of the state University System strategic Plan.

**Section (3) Criteria for New Degree Program Approval** – A proposal for a new degree program shall be approved by a university board of trustees and the Board of Governors only if it meets the following criteria:

**1. Institutional and State-Level Accountability**

   1. The Program is Consistent with the State University System Strategic Plan, and the University Mission, University Strategic Plan, and University Work Plan.
   2. There is a Demonstrated Need for Program Graduates, Research, and/or Service
3. The Program Does Not Unnecessarily Duplicate Existing State University System Degree Programs.
4. Financial Planning and Resources are Sufficient for Implementation.
5. There is a Sufficient Projected Benefit of the Program to the University, Local Community, and State.
6. Access and Articulation are Maintained for All Programs.

(b) Institutional Readiness
1. The Institution Demonstrates an Ability to Implement a High-Quality Program.
2. The Curriculum is Appropriate for the Discipline and Program Level.
3. Sufficient Qualified Faculty is Available.
4. Sufficient Institutional Resources are Available.

Strategic Goal(s) Item Supports:
The PhD degree program in Rehabilitation Sciences strongly aligns with the FL BOG Strategic Priorities and Goals for 2012-2025;

(1) **Teaching & Learning** - Educating the next generation of faculty scholars and researchers to populate the graduate and professional educational programs which train the future health care workforce, increasing the number of degrees awarded in STEM area of strategic emphasis;

(2) **Scholarship, Research & Innovation** - Converting university research in rehabilitation sciences into the commercialization or improvement of products, such as mobility aids, prosthetics and therapeutic robotics, while strengthening the University’s reputation for the quality of scholarship, research and innovation;

(3) **Community & Business Engagement** - Increasing faculty capacity to support a vibrant healthcare workforce. Our PhD program is an integral component of our USF-Tampa Veterans’ Reintegration Strategy. We currently enjoy business connections with MedX/WellTek, Symmetry, Endolite, Otto Bock, and TRS corporations. The PhD program will become the hub through which existing USF Health and Tampa campus academic assets can leverage the full capability of USF within the SUS in addressing the needs of Florida’s population thus enhancing our engagement with communities and business entities.

The PhD degree program in Rehabilitation Sciences will address three (3) areas of strategic emphasis described in the SUS Strategic Plan. We will meet a documented regional, state and national workforce demand for qualified health professions faculty (Education & Health Professions) to populate the faculty of high wage/high demand programs such as Physical Therapy (39% growth), Occupational Therapy (33% growth) and Rehabilitation Counseling (28% growth) – (data accessed from Bureau of Labor Statistics website, [http://www.bls.gov/](http://www.bls.gov/) 4-19-13).

The PhD degree program in Rehabilitation Sciences will develop and enhance the research preparation capabilities of degreed rehabilitation professionals to expand life science scholarship and research (STEM) related to
enablement-disablement and quality of life issues emerging in our society. The latter holds the greatest potential for engagement and partnership with a variety of state and federal governmental agencies, industries and the private business sector challenged to forecast and meet the needs of a rapidly aging population. Florida Department of Elder Affairs estimates 9.76 million Floridians are headed toward and will be turning 65 within the next nine years.

The PhD degree program in Rehabilitation Sciences is closely aligned with the USF System Strategic Plan Goals to:

1. create well-educated and highly skilled global citizens through our continuing commitment to student success;
2. develop high-impact research and innovation to change lives, improve health, and foster sustainable development and positive society change and
3. build a highly effective, major economic engine, creating new partnerships to build a strong and sustainable future for Florida in the global economy and
4. provide sound financial management to establish a strong and sustainable economic base in support of USF’s continued academic advancement.


Supporting Documentation: Proposal for PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences degree CIP 51.2314 at USF Health, Morsani College of Medicine, School of Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Sciences

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