Florida Gulf Coast University Board of Trustees
June 19, 2007

SUBJECT: New Degree Proposal: Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.)

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

Approve new Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) program.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FGCU is requesting permission to offer a Doctor of Physical Therapy program as described in the Executive Summary.

Supporting Documentation Included: (1) Memo from Provost, and (2) Executive Summary

Prepared by: Associate Vice President for Planning and Institutional Performance Paul Snyder, and Director of Program Development and Curriculum Cathy Duff

Legal Review by: General Counsel Wendy Morris (June 4, 2007)

Submitted by: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Bonnie Yegidis
May 25, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO:       Trustee Larry Hart, Chair  
           Academic/Student/Faculty Affairs Committee  
           FGCU Board of Trustees

FROM:    Bonnie L. Veydis  
          Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Doctor of Physical Therapy

The College of Health Professions is proposing the addition of a Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.). The proposed program builds on the existing M.S. in Physical Therapy and moves FGCU to a degree program that is consistent with the standard in the profession of Physical Therapy. The program is designed to prepare graduates for the ever increasing scope of physical therapy practice as well as the level of autonomy with which graduates must practice. The program was approved by the college curriculum team and the university-wide Graduate Curriculum Team.

The D.P.T. will be 115 credit hours in length. Students will enroll on a full-time basis for eight consecutive semesters. Successful completion of the program will qualify graduates to sit for the National Physical Therapy Examination, and seek licensure as a physical therapist in any state in the United States once successful.

Implementation of the D.P.T. program is proposed for Fall 2008. Two full-time 12-month faculty are required for program implementation, with two additional faculty lines needed by year two (shared lines). Upon implementation, $8337 is required to strengthen the library collection. This same amount for library resources is required on an annually recurring basis. To provide adequate dedicated teaching space, $95,000 is required for classroom renovation in BHG. The resources needed for the additional faculty lines, library collection, and classroom renovation will be funded through increased revenue flowing to the university as a result of the increased number of credit hours generated by students in the new program.

The program is consistent with FGCU strategic plan and mission and will serve an identifiable need. I recommend approval. Upon approval by the FGCU Board of Trustees, the proposed D.P.T. program will be submitted to the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) for review and approval, consistent with BOG Regulation 6C-8.011 New Academic Program Authorization.
FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY

Executive Summary
New Program Proposal

Degree: Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.)
Major: Physical Therapy
College: Health Professions
Department: Physical Therapy and Human Performance
Anticipated Implementation: Fall 2008
Suggested CIP: 51.2308

Program Description

The proposed DPT program will replace the current existing entry-level masters program in physical therapy. It is built upon the foundation of the current existing entry-level program in physical therapy (MSPT) that will be phased out by 2010. The proposed DPT program was developed in response to the rapidly changing demands and expected standards in the field of physical therapy that require graduates of physical therapy programs to be prepared for independent practice, and to function as independent critical thinkers who possess an increasingly broad knowledge and skills base. The curriculum of the proposed program is specifically designed to address the ever increasing breadth and depth of knowledge, skills, and problem-solving abilities required of an independent health care practitioner. To meet this need, 80% of physical therapy programs nationally have already transitioned to the DPT, with 99% of programs expected to be at the DPT level by 2010.

Because of this increase in curricular content and through moving the curriculum to the doctoral level, students will enroll in 115 credit hours during their 3 years (8 semesters) in the program. This will result in a significant increase in the number of full-time equivalent students generated. In order to meet program accreditation requirements, it will be necessary to hire additional faculty in the next two years in addition to the expansion of teaching lab facilities to support the program. Students will be admitted in cohort groups of 24 each fall term. The additional costs of the revised program should be offset by the increased revenue flowing to the university as a result of the greater number of credit hours generated by each student.

In addition, the proposed program provides the opportunity for currently licensed physical therapists to obtain the DPT degree by means of the transitional DPT (t-DPT) option. The t-DPT will consist of 30 credit hours of coursework offered in the entry-level DPT program, and will be
offered fully on-line. The t-DPT will generate new graduate enrollment above and beyond the entry-level, full-time program.

Consistency with FGCU Mission and Strategic Plan

The Mission of the Program in Physical Therapy is congruent with both those of the College of Health Professions and Florida Gulf Coast University. This congruency is evident in the program’s focus on meeting the needs of the local community, academic excellence, and preparing competent, caring health professionals.

The proposed program is consistent with the Strategic Plan of the Florida Board of Governors. In accordance with the BOG Strategic Plan, FGCU’s proposed DPT program addresses goals associated with increasing the number of degrees granted, particularly in the health professions, and improving licensure pass rates in critical areas. Although the existing program has a pass rate of just over 90%, the evolution of the field will require programs to continue to educate students at a broader and deeper level in order to pass licensure exams. The proposed program will graduate more, and better prepared professionals to meet the needs of the future of health care.

The FGCU Strategic Plan includes the goals of providing high quality education and possessing a talented and dedicated Faculty and Staff. Through advancing the physical therapy program to the DPT level, the university will deliver a higher quality and thorough program to prepare entry-level and practicing physical therapists. In addition, recruitment of highly qualified faculty will be greatly enhanced by offering a program that is consistent with the standards of the discipline of physical therapy education.

Need and Demand

Currently, there is a great need for physical therapists, with graduates being able to choose from multiple employment opportunities. Positions for physical therapists are projected to grow from 10,326 in 2006 to 13,088 by 2014 in the State of Florida (Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, October, 2006). Nationally, the unemployment rate for physical therapists is .2% (APTA, December 2005). With such national figures, it is not surprising that there are local unmet workforce needs. At any point in time, considering FGCU’s five-county service area, there are approximately 50 unfilled physical therapy positions, in a variety of practice settings including those in hospitals serving in-patients and out-patients, early intervention programs, public schools, long term care facilities, private clinics, home health, and others. Although local students who have enrolled in our current program have tended to remain in the area following graduation and have begun to meet the local workforce needs, there continues to be significant unmet need in the communities surrounding FGCU.

On average, DPT programs consistently experience higher numbers of applicants, fill their cohort groups, and enjoy a highly qualified applicant pool. The transition to the DPT will allow the program to admit students to the capacity of the program, thereby better meeting the workforce needs of the clinical community. Graduates of PT programs receive multiple employment opportunities. One-hundred percent of FGCU graduates are employed once licensed. Because of the tremendous employment opportunities for licensed physical therapists, there is a significant demand for physical therapy programs. Nationally, 80% of programs are
enrolling students in DPT programs. Specifically, students are demanding a DPT program for their studies. This impacts FGCU’s ability to meet the demands of students locally. Of those students who have been accepted into FGCU’s physical therapy program but chose to enroll elsewhere, 50% report that the lack of the DPT at FGCU was the major reason for not enrolling. In addition to the demand from students new to the study of physical therapy, practicing licensed physical therapists are actively seeking and enrolling in transitional DPT programs (t-DPT) to raise their credentials. FGCU receives ongoing requests for information from practicing, licensed physical therapists about the proposed DPT, its possible initiation date, and number of seats available.

**Enrollment**

In response to the need and demand of the community and profession, the proposed program will admit 24 full-time students each fall semester. Due to the high credit hour requirement, each enrolled student generates the equivalent of 1.5 graduate FTE. By year three of the program, the MSPT program will be completely phased out, and the DPT program will have 68 students enrolled at any point in time (82.3 graduate FTE per year).

In addition to the enrollment of students in the entry-level curriculum, the program will generate additional graduate enrollment through the t-DPT enrollment. At this time it is difficult to project the number of students who will enroll, however, most graduates of the existing program, as well as area clinicians have inquired about FGCU offering a t-DPT program. With its online method of delivery, there is a nationwide market to licensed physical therapist. Growth of this added enrollment will be dependent on available faculty resources.

**Resources**

Resources currently used to support the existing physical therapy program will be redirected to support the DPT program. These resources include shared laboratory space, laboratory equipment, and faculty/staff. Existing library resources will also be utilized to support faculty/students. With the significant growth in courses in the curriculum, two faculty positions are requested to be hired by August, 2008. Two additional shared positions are requested for August 2009. One shared position will support the increased teaching load in neuroscience/gross anatomy, and will also provide teaching expertise in the athletic training, human performance, community health, and occupational therapy programs. The second shared position will provide teaching expertise in the area of exercise physiology for the DPT program, as well as the rapidly growing human performance program.

Program growth necessitates the request for dedicated teaching space in an existing academic building (BHG 170/172). A general estimate of $95,000 is projected for renovation costs to these existing instructional spaces. These renovations would provide adequate specialized laboratory space for the DPT program, as well as allow the space to be shared with existing undergraduate programs in athletic training and human performance that function as “feeder” programs to the DPT. Lastly, additions to the library collection will be minimal, and are estimated to cost $8337. Significantly increased tuition revenue will be generated with the increase in cohort size as well the 51% increase in credit hours that each student will enroll in during their 3 years in the
program, making the graduate physical therapy program significantly more cost efficient for the university.

To ensure ongoing enrollment in the physical therapy program, the Master of Science in physical therapy program will be phased out slowly with each graduating cohort group. If the DPT program is approved, the final cohort of MS PT students will enter the program in Fall 2007 and graduate in May 2010. Beginning in the Fall 2008, the first cohort of DPT students would be admitted and would graduate in May 2011. This seamless transition allows for efficient use of university resources during the transitional period. It is proposed that graduates of FGCU’s MSPT program will be able to complete their transitional DPT by extending their time at the university by no more than four additional semesters.

Approval

Upon approval by the FGCU Board of Trustees, the proposed D.P.T. program will be submitted to the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) for review and approval, consistent with BOG Regulation 6C-8.011 New Academic Program Authorization.