

## VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

## A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Establishment of the Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Science in the Department of Rehabilitation MedicineRECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is the recommendation of the administration and the Academic and Student Affairs Committee that the Board of Regents grant authority to the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, in the School of Medicine, to offer the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Rehabilitation Science degree program, effective immediately. The Ph.D. degree program will have provisional status with a review to be scheduled in the 2010-2011 academic year. At such time that the Board of Regents grants continuing status, a ten-year review cycle would begin.

BACKGROUND:

In January 2005, the Graduate School received a proposal from the graduate faculty of the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine requesting approval to offer the Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Science degree program. The Department proposed to implement the program in autumn quarter 2006 with an initial enrollment of up to 6 students.

Rehabilitation Science is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on human function and disability. Basic and applied research from health sciences, social sciences, engineering, and related fields are directed toward (1) enhancing physical and psychosocial functioning, participation in life situations, and quality of life of people with disabilities; and (2) informing relevant social and health care policy. The framework for the Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Science program is the bio-psycho-social-environmental model that synthesizes medical, psychological, social and environmental perspectives to the enabling-disabling processes and related habilitation and rehabilitation approaches.

Demand for the program is evidenced by the rapidly increasing rate of disability due to several reasons. The population nationally is aging; technological advances have led to increased numbers of individuals surviving devastating illnesses and trauma; the survival rate of infants with severe disabilities is increasing; and poverty, low birth weight, and lack of health care continue to place children at developmental risk, thus increasing the need for special services. In contrast to this situation, a shortage exists for qualified providers. As the number of people with disabilities increases and as health care and social services costs increase, the demand for doctoral-level researchers fluent in disability issues, policy and rehabilitation will increase. While most program graduates will pursue faculty positions in academia, others will seek positions in state and federal agencies, health care facilities, and policy centers requiring individuals with research and leadership skills acquired through interdisciplinary doctoral-level preparation. The proposed program will be the first research-oriented doctorate in Rehabilitation Science to be offered in Washington, and one of only ten in the country.

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The proposed interdisciplinary doctoral program will prepare students as researchers, educators, and leaders in the field of rehabilitation science and to contribute to the development of rehabilitation practice and policy. The program will draw prospective students with bachelor's, master's, and clinical doctoral degrees in Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech and Language Pathology, Rehabilitation Counseling, Prosthetics and Orthotics, Medicine, Engineering, or related fields that focus on linkages between and among pathophysiology, impairment, functional limitations, and societal limitations.

On October 20, 2005, the Vice Provost and Dean and Associate Dean for Academic Programs of the Graduate School appointed a review committee to evaluate the Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Science proposal. The composition of the five-member review committee included three University of Washington faculty members from related disciplines and two faculty members from other universities with expertise in the field of Rehabilitation Science. The committee noted the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine is one of the premier academic departments in this field in the nation and that it has numerous strengths. Of particular importance for a Ph.D. program, is its strength in research. The quality and magnitude of its impressive record of interdisciplinary research in a variety of areas are reflected in its number one ranking among U.S. departments of rehabilitation medicine in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding for the fiscal year 2003. The review committee recommended unanimously that the proposed Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Science degree program be approved and implemented, and that it be given provisional status with a review to occur in five years.

The Graduate School Council on January 26, 2006 recommended unanimously that the proposal be forwarded to the Higher Education Coordinating Board for review and approval. The Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School concurred with this recommendation.

On July 27, 2006, in Resolution No. 06-07, the Higher Education Coordinating Board approved the proposal by graduate faculty of the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine to offer the Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Science.

The Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, the Vice Dean for Research and Graduate Education of the School of Medicine, and the Provost have reviewed and approved the recommendation. The Higher Education Coordinating Board will be informed of the Board of Regents' action on the Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Science degree program.