

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
December 6, 2007

SUBJECT: Ph.D. in Epidemiology at the University of Florida

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

Consider for Approval the Ph.D. in Epidemiology at the University of Florida,
CIP Code: 26.1309

AUTHORITY FOR BOARD OF GOVERNORS ACTION

Section 7(d), Art. IX, Florida Constitution
Board of Governors Regulation 8.011

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The University of Florida, College of Public Health and Health Professions, is seeking authorization to establish a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) program in Epidemiology. The Ph.D. program is designed to facilitate students' development of competence in epidemiological and biostatistics methods, understanding of contemporary epidemiological issues and challenges, entry-level college teaching skills, independent scientific investigation, and professional behavior. The proposal cites recent national reports on health care needs which confirm that epidemiology is a growing contributor to the advancement of health sciences research and discovery, and state that the United States faces a national shortage of epidemiologists, particularly those with doctoral-level training.

A minimum of 90 credits beyond the bachelor's degree would be required for the doctoral degree. The proposed program would include two concentrations -- clinical epidemiology and general epidemiology -- and the curriculum was designed to incorporate core competencies in two major domains -- general skills and knowledge (descriptive epidemiology, biology, and basic knowledge of leading problems and history of discipline) and research (problem conceptualization, study design, data collection and mentoring, data management, data analysis, interpretation, communication, ethics, and a substantive area).

Observations and relevant page numbers in staff analysis:

- The University believes that this Ph.D. program would support its goals to become a top tier institution nationally and to continue to be a leader in health care research. (page 2)
- The academic and physical resources are in place at the University to address the proposed program's goals. (pages 3, 7-8)

- The proposed program would begin with four (4) students, and would build to twenty-eight (28) students over a five-year period. (pages 1, 7, 10)
- In Year 1, the low projected student enrollment (3.0 FTE) results in a high cost per FTE (\$93,718). In Year 5, the projected student enrollment (18.95 FTE) results in a cost per FTE (\$24,929) that is more consistent with similar programs. (pages 1, 10)
- Eighteen (18) faculty members would have primary roles in providing instruction and student support in the Ph.D. program, and seventeen (17) faculty members would have secondary roles. (page 7)
- The proposal indicates that no new funds would be requested for the proposed program, as funding would be derived from the current college budgets for the College of Public Health and Health Professions and the College of Medicine. (page 10)
- The proposed program would be the only stand-alone Ph.D. program in Epidemiology in the State University System of Florida. The University of South Florida and Florida International University offer Ph.D. programs in Public Health, with a concentration in Epidemiology. The University of Miami offers a Ph.D. in Epidemiology. (page 9)
- The College of Public Health and Health Professions is seeking accreditation as a College of Public Health and states that the proposed Ph.D. in Epidemiology is an essential component of its accreditation plans. The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) cites that to gain accreditation, “as a minimum, the school shall offer the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree in each of the five areas of knowledge basic to public health and a doctoral degree in at least three of the five specified areas of public health knowledge.” The proposal does not identify the three doctoral programs that the College intends to establish to meet the CEPH standard. (pages 2, 5-6)
- The accreditation body (CEPH) has clarified that a Ph.D. in Public Health designation can be used to meet the doctoral degree standard, as long as there are at least three distinct public health areas of concentration offered within that degree. (pages 5)
- Regarding accreditation, there is now an initiative in the field of public health to develop a national voluntary credentialing examination for graduates of CEPH-accredited programs and schools. (page 6)

Supporting Documentation Included: Provided with Committee Materials

Facilitators/Presenters: Richard Stevens, Director of Academic and Student Affairs