

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Committee on Academic and Student Affairs

AGENDA ITEM: III – A

DATE: April 1-2, 2015

SUBJECT: USD Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) Consultants' Report

The Board of Regents approved the University of South Dakota's Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) program at their December 2014 meeting. Board Policy 2.1 requires external consultants to review new graduate program proposals; however, due to the timing of the Board of Regents meeting and the conclusion of the external review, the [Board item](#) included the consultants' preliminary report, but not the final report. The attached report represents the final report from the consultants reviewing the program.

RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Information only.

December 4, 2014

Paul Turman, PhD
System Vice President For Academic Affairs

Jay Perry, PhD
Director of Academic Programs

South Dakota Board of Regents
306 East Capitol Avenue, Suite 200
Pierre, South Dakota 57501-2545

Dear Drs. Thurman and Perry,

The purpose of this communication is to provide the South Dakota Board of Regents with a full report of our findings from our external review of the proposal for the Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) under consideration by the University of South Dakota.

Our charge from the Board of Regents was to 1) examine the proposal and supporting documents; 2) interview faculty, staff, and administrators during a visit to the university; 3) evaluate facilities, equipment, and related services; and 4) prepare a written report addressing the questions below. We have completed our review of documents, conducted a visit on November 24, 2014 to interview key personnel, and toured facilities. A summary of our findings is as follows:

1. Program Curriculum: The proposed OTD curriculum is built upon the strong and successful Master's of Occupational Therapy (MOT) curriculum currently in place. We believe that the proposed OTD curriculum will meet and/or exceed the current national standards for occupational therapy with the exception of one Standard. Standard A.2.10 states that all full time faculty must have doctoral degrees. At this time one full time faculty member does not have a doctoral degree; however, she is in progress toward the PhD. The faculty is aware of this issue.

The proposed program will provide students with an excellent preparation for employment as occupational therapists. The faculty have conceptualized a contemporary curriculum that will address current and emerging health needs of patients, communities, and populations. We did identify a couple aspects of the curriculum for clarification and discussion with the faculty. Based on those discussions, we have some suggestions regarding the curriculum for continued faculty consideration.

- As we stated, the OTD curriculum is built upon the successful MOT program. The MOT is a large program in terms of credit load with 81 credits. The proposed OTD program increases the credit load to 110 credits. This is an increase of 29 credits over the MOT program. The OTD program proposal increases the length of the program by one semester. This results in large credit loads each term, including summer of year two. Through discussions with Dr. Brockvelt and the faculty, we

learned that they hope to somewhat mitigate the load by “blocking” several courses within terms resulting in fewer courses taken concurrently. This may alleviate some of the effects of the large credit load. We recommend that the OTD proposal and communication with future students explain this blocking process to help students understand more clearly the actual intensity of study.

- We discussed that in our experience, one and two credit courses often have actual work load and contact hours that exceed their credit assignment. We recommended faculty examine all courses to determine whether or not they may be able to combine similar or related content within single courses with appropriate credit assignment to decrease the number of one and two credit courses.
- We recommended that faculty examine all courses to determine whether or not the content is essential to achieve their mission. Depending on findings, they may be able to reduce the overall credit load.
- We recognize that any reduction in credit load will have budgetary implications. We encourage faculty and administrators to carefully examine budgetary options to support a reduction in credit load should faculty determine selected content could be reduced or eliminated while maintaining a strong program.
- Lastly, we recommended that faculty reconsider the placement of OCTH 733 Promotion of Health and Prevention of Disability within the sequence of the curriculum.

2. Faculty: The current faculty and the addition of approximately 2.5 planned faculty may be sufficient to offer a strong program. However, we believe that the required doctoral capstone mentoring as well as the additional number of courses and credits load may require future reconsideration of numbers of faculty. The faculty and administrative personnel will need to balance faculty workload expectations with budgetary considerations.

The current faculty members have diverse areas of relevant expertise and, in combination with adjunct faculty, have offered a strong MOT program. The plans outlined for additional faculty have considered areas of expertise faculty believe necessary to complement current faculty expertise. We are in agreement with their assessment. The strong support of Administrators is evident and will contribute positively to recruitment of future faculty. In addition, the excellent facilities, equipment, resources, and highly qualified student body will be attractive to future faculty.

3. Facilities, Equipment, and Services: The facilities, equipment, and services provided for faculty and students are outstanding. The Administrators and faculty described the planned move of the program to the new facility near the athletic dome. We believe that faculty and administrators will work collaboratively with the design team for these new spaces and create excellent facilities for the future of the program.

4. Other issues: There are no significant issues that we identified that would negatively affect the proposed OTD program.

5. Summary Recommendation: The strengths of the program include:

- The Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, and the Dean of the School of Allied Health all express strong support for, and pride in the occupational therapy program and faculty. They are knowledgeable about the program and enthusiastic about the future of the program. They encourage and support interprofessional education and collaboration.
- The program director, Dr. Brockevelt, has depth of experience and demonstrated expertise in building and maintaining a successful occupational therapy program. She is a strong faculty mentor and has cultivated a productive and collegial faculty. She is respected within the national occupational therapy community and is active on the national level.
- The program faculty members are enthusiastic, committed, and forward thinking. They appear to work as a cohesive team both inter-and intra-professionally. They express full support for moving the program to the OTD level.
- The facilities are outstanding, as is access to the expertise of other disciplines on campus.
- There is a strong applicant pool from which to select very capable students who have potential to be successful with a rigorous curriculum.
- As mentioned before, the OTD program is building on a strong and successful MOT program.

We have not identified any significant weaknesses of the OTD proposal that would deter moving forward. We did have recommendations for consideration regarding the proposed curriculum and they are described in detail above.

We believe that the Board of Regents can take great pride in the occupational therapy program and faculty. The OTD program proposal places the University of South Dakota at the forefront of the occupational therapy profession's move to the clinical doctoral level of preparation for practice. We commend the faculty and the Board for moving in this direction. The graduates of the program will be well prepared to address the unique health challenges of the State of South Dakota and graduates will easily function at high levels wherever they may settle.

In conclusion, we wholeheartedly recommend that the Board of Regents move forward with the Occupational Therapy Doctorate at the University of South Dakota.

It is a pleasure to provide this external review. We would like to commend Dr. Perry, the USD Administration, Dr. Brockevelt, and the occupational therapy faculty for planning an excellent site visit, engaging with us in meaningful and substantive discussions, and for providing assistance to us as consultants. We were welcomed warmly and we were provided with all of the information we needed to fully understand the USD OTD program proposal. We wish you the very best with your future plans for the occupational therapy doctorate.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

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