

**TOPIC: PROPOSAL TO OFFER A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE
IN OCCUPATION AND REHABILITATION SCIENCE AT
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

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I. SUMMARY

Colorado State University (CSU) has submitted a proposal to offer a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Occupation and Rehabilitation Science. The proposed program will prepare candidates to become experts in human performance and participation in every day occupations as it concerns human performance and its relationship to functional behavior and task performance. These are defined as activities that impact a sense of order or routine, provide meaning and purpose of daily life, and influence health and well being. This degree will be interdisciplinary in nature and will connect research in rehabilitation science, occupational science, and multiple relevant fields of study.

II. BACKGROUND

The following is summarized from Colorado State University's proposal:

In proposing a new Ph.D. in Occupation and Rehabilitation Science, the Occupational Therapy Department intends to integrate occupational science and rehabilitation science: two highly synergistic academic areas. Occupation and Rehabilitation Science will draw upon rehabilitation science's contributions that shed light on human performance, especially as related to function and disability. It will also draw upon occupational science's sharp focus on everyday occupations and outcomes associated with occupational participation among people of all ages and abilities.

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports the role and mission of Colorado State University. The statutory mission states:

There is hereby established a college at Ft. Collins, to be known as Colorado state university. Colorado state university shall be a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards offering a comprehensive array of baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. Consistent with the tradition of land grant universities, Colorado state university has exclusive authority to offer graduate and undergraduate programs in agriculture, forestry, natural resources, and veterinary medicine. The Colorado commission on higher education, in consultation with the board of governors of the Colorado state university system, shall designate those graduate level programs that are the primary responsibility of Colorado state university. C.R.S. 23-31-101

EVIDENCE OF NEED (EXCERPTED FROM THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL)

Establishment of a Ph.D. Program in Occupation and Rehabilitation Science at CSU will prepare faculty who can succeed in tenure-line positions in occupational therapy, occupational science, and rehabilitation science programs in research universities.

Student Perspective

External student inquiries regarding a Ph.D. in occupational therapy at CSU have been consistently averaging 15 per year for the past five years. As the department's national reputation has grown (has consistently been ranked a Top 10 occupational therapy program in *US News & World Report*), student requests for doctoral training have increased, even without active recruitment. CSU has a number of current Ph.D. students who wish to be mentored by occupational therapy faculty and conduct research in occupational therapy labs and centers that must be accommodated via entry into Ph.D. programs in other units on campus (e.g., School of Education, Psychology, Health & Exercise Science). While these students and occupational therapy faculty value the opportunity to work together, this arrangement suffers from some limitations. First, to continue their graduate education at CSU, students in the Master's occupational therapy program must find another Ph.D. program, which may not align with their experience or future career goals. Students from other universities who wish to conduct research training with an occupational therapy faculty member at CSU must enter into another unit's Ph.D. program. Second, the student's research training and experience are often not well-integrated with the Ph.D. curriculum content and process when both elements are provided by two different departments. Finally, by not completing a doctoral program tied to core concepts and needs of the field, students experience greater challenges in obtaining academic or research positions in the field. These faculty members serve as students' primary financial, research, and advising support. Yet despite fulfilling this role, faculty members receive neither workload credit nor formal recognition as the student's primary mentor.

Faculty Perspective

Over the last five years, seven occupational therapy faculty members have been substantially involved with extramurally funded research. Each of these faculty members has obtained financial assistance that supports graduate students within and outside CSU's Occupational Therapy Department. Additionally, each faculty member has expressed strong interest in and commitment to mentoring and supporting Ph.D. students enrolled in the proposed Occupation and Rehabilitation Science Ph.D. In addition to chairing or co-chairing campus committees, occupational therapy faculty have been involved as members of Ph.D. committees from several different units at CSU (e.g., School of Education, Health & Exercise Science, and Psychology).

DUPLICATION

Several other institutions in Colorado offer similar degree programs. The University of Northern Colorado offers a Ph.D. in Human Rehabilitation as well as a Ph.D. in Health

Services Research. In addition, the University of Colorado Denver and Colorado State University also currently offer a Ph.D. in Health Services Research. There is a clear demand for public health and human services and trained professionals. Rehabilitation often requires the integrated effort of an interdisciplinary team comprising of occupational therapists, physical therapists, exercise trainers, psychologists and other rehabilitation professionals. With a focus on human performance and occupational participation, the Occupation and Rehabilitation Science Ph.D. is distinguished from the other degrees as it is guided by a different, broader theoretical model; and while it does not ignore the role of rehabilitation counseling and vocational rehabilitation in the process of performance and occupational participation, the proposed Ph.D. will train scholars who have the ability to conduct interdisciplinary research and teaching that addresses all critical factors that influence the processes of performance and participation.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129 (6)(b), Department staff finds that the proposed program fits the institution's statutory role and mission to offer a comprehensive array of baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degree programs in the state of Colorado. The Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Occupation and Rehabilitation Science is consistent with Colorado State University's campus role and mission.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Commission approve this degree.

V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Copies of all relevant materials are on file in the Academic Affairs office and are available upon request.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129(6)(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.