

**APPROVED**  
**February 4, 2014**

Item #III-10  
February 4, 2014

**NEW UNITS OF INSTRUCTION, PUBLIC SERVICE,  
AND RESEARCH AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** This item requests approval of one degree program at one public university.

**Action Requested:** That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the following:

Northern Illinois University

- Ph.D. in Health Sciences in the Fox Valley Region



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**NEW UNITS OF INSTRUCTION, PUBLIC SERVICE,  
AND RESEARCH AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

By statute, the Illinois Board of Higher Education is responsible for approving new on-campus and off-campus units of instruction, organized research, and public service, and units of administration proposed by public university governing boards. The Board's approval criteria, defined in rules adopted for administering the statute, address university mission, academic control, faculty and staff, support services, financial resources, student demand, curriculum, statewide need, and congruence with Board policies and priorities. In addition to the approval criteria in rules, each new program was reviewed for its contributions to the goals of *The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success*, which sets forth new priorities to guide Illinois higher education. Staff recommendations are based on analyses of application materials and responses to staff questions, and, for advanced degree programs, recommendations of external consultants.

**Northern Illinois University**

**Proposed Program Title in Region of Authorization:** Ph.D. in Health Sciences in the Fox Valley Region

*Projected Enrollments and Degrees:* Northern Illinois University has projected that enrollment in the proposed Ph.D. in Health Sciences will grow from ten students in the first year to 61 students in the fifth year. Northern Illinois University has projected that approximately 16 degrees will be awarded in this program in its fifth year.

**Background**

Northern Illinois University (the University or NIU) requests authority to offer the Ph.D. in Health Sciences with an interprofessional orientation toward research and practice. The mission of the Ph.D. in Health Sciences is to prepare students from a wide range of professions to function effectively as interprofessionally-oriented scholars and researchers within health-related academic and nonacademic settings. The proposed Ph.D. is designed to address significant faculty shortages in the health sciences from a multidisciplinary perspective. As such, the program builds on the existing health and health-related programs and faculty expertise within NIU's College of Health and Human Sciences. These include programs such as nursing, physical therapy, speech pathology, public health, and nutrition. By building on the college's existing programs, students will have the opportunity to work with and learn from faculty, community leaders, and fellow students from across the spectrum of health and health-related disciplines. The program is designed with an interprofessional approach to prepare students to become faculty, researchers, and leaders in health sciences professions. Housed in NIU's College of Health and Human Sciences, the degree will be delivered in a hybrid format, using synchronous and asynchronous online components as well as periodic face-to-face meetings.

## **Need**

*1050.30(a)(6): A) The unit of instruction, research or public service is educationally and economically justified based on the educational priorities and needs of the citizens of Illinois; B) The unit of instruction, research or public service meets a need that is not currently met by existing institutions and units of instruction, research or public service.*

The proposed Ph.D. in Health Sciences is designed to address the problem of faculty shortages in health care educational programs. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2013 Georgetown study, *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements*, documents high demand for, and shortages of, health care professionals, particularly in the allied health professions and nursing. Professional associations for various health specialties have articulated the impact of faculty shortages on educational institutions' ability to educate sufficient numbers of nurses, physical therapists, speech pathologists, etc. For example, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing documents turning away over 10,000 qualified students because of faculty shortages. The Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education has identified as a critical problem the need for institutions to fill 140 open positions in the 213 accredited physical therapy programs in the U.S. The American Speech Language Hearing Association calls the impact of faculty shortages staggering. These shortages of health professionals who hold academic doctorates and can function as university-level faculty in critical programs such as nursing, physical therapy, and speech pathology significantly limit the number of students who can be admitted to these programs. Addressing the severe shortage of faculty in these health professions will make it possible to educate more students to meet current and future economic demands and to increase the number of postsecondary degrees in fields with critical shortages.

### ***The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success***

The proposed Ph.D. in Health Sciences addresses Goal 3 of *The Illinois Public Agenda*: High quality credentials to meet economic demand. Specifically, this program will contribute to increasing the number of postsecondary degrees in fields of critical skills shortages. There is a growing demand for university programs to educate health professionals and a severe shortage of doctorally prepared faculty to meet this need. To address this shortage, the Ph.D. in Health Sciences will prepare graduates to assume positions as faculty members and to educate the health professionals needed to meet increasing societal demand.

### **Comparable Programs in Illinois**

Three comparable programs in Illinois offer a Ph.D. or doctorate in the area of health sciences or health studies. These are Rosalind Franklin University (RFU), Northwestern University and the University of Chicago, all private universities. RFU offers a Ph.D./Doctor of Science in Interprofessional Health Studies. RFU is significantly more expensive with a \$40,500 cost, as opposed to an estimated \$27,495 for NIU. Northwestern University also offers a Ph.D. in Health Science, but that program is not designed with an interprofessional approach and costs \$41,904. The hybrid format of the NIU program targets a market less likely to apply to the Northwestern program. The University of Chicago (UC) offers a Ph.D. in Health Studies that focuses on biostatistics, epidemiology, and health services research. These curricular differences, the cost of the UC program, and other factors suggest no significant competition with the NIU program. The proposed NIU Ph.D. in Health Studies addresses the challenge of severe faculty shortages in the health and health-related professions in ways that differ from related programs in regard to curricular focus, cost, and course delivery format.

## **Mission and Objectives**

*1050.30(a)(1): A) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with the mission of the college or university; B) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with what the unit title implies.*

The mission of NIU is to promote excellence and engagement in teaching and learning, research and scholarship, creativity and artistry, and outreach and service. The mission of the proposed Ph.D. in Health Sciences is consistent with the mission of the university through preparing students to be scholars and researchers who function in academic and practice settings and model a commitment to lifelong learning and engagement across universities, professions, and communities.

The objectives of the proposed program are to prepare graduates to:

- Apply in-depth interprofessional knowledge to research and practice;
- Demonstrate professional integrity in the execution of the roles of educator and researcher;
- Design, conduct, and analyze the results of original research;
- Disseminate new knowledge and, as appropriate, assess the application of that knowledge to professional practice; and
- Demonstrate the interprofessional communication skills necessary to function effectively in today's academic and professional environment.

The objectives of the proposed program are consistent with, and support, the mission of the University and the requested degree title is congruent with the corresponding degree program objectives and curricula.

## **Curriculum and Assessment**

*1050.30(b)(1): A) The caliber and content of the curriculum must assure that the objectives of the unit of instruction will be achieved. B) The breadth and depth of the curriculum must be consistent with what the title of the unit of instruction implies. C) The admission and graduation requirements for the unit of instruction must be consistent with the stated objectives of the unit of instruction. D) Institutions must show the capacity to develop, deliver and support academic programs. Procedures and policies that will assure the effective design, conduct and evaluation of the degree program under the academic control of the institution must be developed. Assessment plans must demonstrate that the institution has identified clear and appropriate program and student learning goals and has defined appropriate outcomes. Appropriate data must be collected and may be requested by the Board to show the level of student learning that has occurred as a result of participation in the institution's programs of study. E) Degree programs must meet [appropriate] requirements.*

## **Admission Requirements**

Applicants to the proposed program are required to submit the following: an application to the NIU graduate school, transcripts, GRE scores, three letters of recommendation, and a personal statement of interest. Eligible applicants will be invited to interview with the Admissions Committee, during which they will be assessed relative to interest in research, interpersonal and social skills, and potential for interprofessional collaboration.

NIU anticipates that the majority of students admitted to the program will possess entry-level professional graduate degrees. However, this curricular model does not preclude admission of other students, such as, students with a background in the social or behavioral sciences, business, exercise science, or law. Students applying to the Ph.D. program upon completion of a bachelor's degree will be required to complete an additional 30 credit hours of focused graduate work, preferably earning a master's or entry-level graduate professional degree. The curriculum can accommodate part-time as well as full-time students.

## Curriculum

The 45 credit hour curriculum includes 20 credit hours of core courses, 12 credit hours of an individual program of study in a focused area of study, a candidacy exam (one credit hour), and 12 credit hours of dissertation research that flows from the individual program of study and reflects the interprofessional orientation of the program. Students must receive approval from their graduate committee to take the candidacy examination. The candidacy examination is based on the core courses and the students' individual programs of study. Upon satisfactory completion of the candidacy examination, students are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.

## Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

In the assessment plan for the proposed Ph.D. in Health Sciences, individual core faculty members or committees of faculty, such as candidacy examination or dissertation committees, will assess the degree to which individual students have mastered the skills and knowledge reflected in the program learning outcomes. Assessment will focus on the program's student learning objectives and use tests, exams, and evaluation of project reports. NIU anticipates that the core faculty will meet at the end of each spring semester to review students' progress in mastering the learning outcomes. This review creates the platform for faculty to discuss the progress of individual students as well as trend data that indicate the degree to which the program is meeting its targets. In addition, the assessment results of student learning outcomes will be reviewed in the University's annual program reviews which are required of all doctoral programs.

The proposed degree requires dissertation research that is an original contribution to the body of research in the health sciences. The written product of the research will be in the traditional dissertation format or in the format of a sequence of three publishable articles. As is standard practice among doctoral degree granting institutions, NIU's policy requires that dissertation research must involve original contributions to the field and be developed under the supervision of the approved dissertation committee. The dissertation process will culminate with a student defense and feedback from the dissertation committee.

## Program Assessment

Results from the evaluation of student products, such as papers and presentations, within specific courses will allow faculty to assess how well specific course and curricular program components are facilitating student mastery of learning outcomes. There is a structure in place for the program faculty to assess program strengths and weaknesses at the end of each academic year. These reviews will be used to identify gaps in current data should those gaps exist. Of particular importance to the program will be looking at trends versus targets in areas such as: eligibility to take candidacy examinations, passing candidacy examinations, defending dissertation research proposals, and the dissertation defense.

## **Facilities (space, equipment, instructional materials)**

*1050.30(a)(4): A) Facilities, equipment and instructional resources (e.g., laboratory supplies and equipment, instructional materials, computational equipment) necessary to support high quality academic work in the unit of instruction, research or public service are available and maintained; B) Clinical sites necessary to meet the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service; C) Library holdings and acquisitions, owned or contracted for by the institution, that are necessary to support high quality instruction and scholarship in the unit of instruction, research and public service, are conveniently available and accessible, and can be maintained.*

### Technology and Instructional Resources

The proposed Ph.D. in Health Sciences will be housed in the College of Health and Human Sciences. The college has access to numerous smart classrooms both on the main campus as well as NIU's campuses in Rockford, Naperville, and Hoffman Estates. Although the program is not laboratory based, the college has 17 dedicated teaching laboratories and clinics as well as over 400 practicum sites that support its 11 accredited health related programs. These facilities are available should a student's Individual Program of Study or doctoral research require them. NIU and the College of Health and Human Sciences have the necessary technology and research capabilities to support the proposed doctoral program.

### Library

The NIU library system consists of close to 2.2 million circulating volumes, approximately 339,000 volumes of print serials, over 38,000 electronic titles, 239,000 government publications, and over 239,000 microforms. NIU libraries participate in the I-Share System and provide access to a variety of electronic databases. A wide range of library services is also provided including reference, information delivery services, reserves, and library instruction. The monograph collection for health sciences is supported by existing materials purchased for other departments including psychology, sociology, and government publications. The Information Delivery Services Department also provides NIU faculty, staff, and students with access to library materials not owned by the NIU Libraries. Any materials which circulate at any participating library (with some exceptions in textbooks) may be requested at no additional charge to students.

## **Faculty and Staff**

*1050.30(a)(3): A) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff ensure that the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are met.*

Faculty for the Ph.D. in Health Sciences program will be drawn from current tenured/tenure-track faculty holding graduate faculty status from across the College of Health and Human Sciences. These faculty members are approved to teach graduate courses and serve on dissertation committees. Nearly 50 percent of the 70 tenured/tenure-track faculty hold senior graduate faculty status, which means they are approved by the Graduate School to chair dissertation committees. Full and senior graduate faculty status is determined by the individual's level of research productivity and a pattern of ongoing teaching responsibilities at the graduate level.

The administrative structure in place to oversee the program includes representatives from all Schools in the College, the College itself, and the University. Within each School, faculty personnel reviews and curricular changes will be undertaken in alignment with School-specific personnel and curricular policies. At the College level, the College Council will undertake review of personnel in the program and the College Curriculum Committee will approve all curricular changes. These groups have University-level counterparts that oversee the program at the University level, the Graduate Council Curriculum Committee and the University Council Personnel Committee. Together these entities oversee the program's faculty and curriculum.

### **Fiscal and Personnel Resources**

*1050.30(a)(5): A) The financial commitments to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are sufficient to ensure that the faculty and staff and support services necessary to offer the unit of instruction, research or public service can be acquired and maintained; B) Projections of revenues necessary to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are based upon supportable estimates of state appropriations, local tax support, student tuition and fees, private gifts, and/or governmental grants and contracts.*

No new state resources are needed to establish the Ph.D. in Health Sciences because most resources, including facilities, equipment, and library resources that will support the proposed programs, are already in place. Because liability will exceed assets in the first year of enrollment, central administration at NIU has confirmed that it will subsidize the Ph.D. program with the understanding that certain enrollment benchmarks will be met.

### **Accreditation and Licensure**

*1050.30(b)(3): Appropriate steps shall be taken to assure that professional accreditation needed for licensure or entry into a profession as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction is maintained or will be granted in a reasonable period of time.*

*1050.50(a)(1): Three years after approval of a new program, the institution shall provide a program progress report to the Board as part of the institution's annual report. The third year progress report shall describe the institution's performance in meeting program objectives and show where any improvements are necessary. The placement of a program in voluntary temporary suspension will not negate the requirement of submitting a third year progress report.*

*1050.50(a)(2)(C): Requirement for Programs in which State Licensure is Required for Employment in the Field: In the case of a program in which State licensure is required for employment in the field, a program can be found to be in good standing if the institution is able to provide evidence that program graduates are eligible to take the appropriate licensure examination and pass rates are maintained as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction. If there is no such evidence, the institution shall report the program as flagged for review.*

The proposed Ph.D. in Health Sciences does not require specialized accreditation or licensure. NIU is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

## **Program Information**

*1050.30(b)(2)(A): The information the institution provides for students and the public...(B) The information listed in subsection (b)(2)(A) shall be available to prospective students prior to enrollment and shall be included in the institution's catalog of programs.*

Information about Northern Illinois University's Ph.D. in Health Sciences, including a detailed description of the curriculum, admission requirements, tuition, fees and other cost information of the program, as well as University and Graduate School policies, will be published on the University's website, [www.niu.edu/](http://www.niu.edu/). Comparable information about the program will be published in the University's Graduate Catalog, and similar information will be available at the College of Health and Human Sciences website.

**Staff Conclusion.** The staff concludes that the Ph.D. in Health Sciences program proposed by Northern Illinois University meets the criteria to implement the Board of Higher Education Act (110 ILCS 205/et.seq.) as set forth in the Board of Higher Education administrative rules (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1050.30), and the Illinois Board of Higher Education policies pertaining to assessment and accreditation for licensure.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolutions:

*The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby grants to Northern Illinois University authorization to establish the Ph.D. in Health Sciences in the Fox Valley Region subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in its application and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.*

