

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Fiscal Affairs and Administrative Policy **NO.:** FAAP 07-28
COMMITTEE DATE: June 6, 2007
BOARD DATE: June 14, 2007

APPROVAL TO PROCEED WITH A WORCESTER STATE COLLEGE PROGRAM STUDY

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby gives Worcester State College approval to proceed with a program study to add administrative office and specialized instructional space capacity, along with replacement of aged athletic facilities. This approval is given with the understanding that Worcester State College is responsible for all costs related to the study and that it will not proceed with design and construction until the Board of Higher Education gives its approval to proceed.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9
Contact: Sue Wolfe, Associate Vice Chancellor for Fiscal & Administrative Affairs

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Worcester State College (WSC) seeks approval to undertake a program study for an Academic Wellness Center. This program study will be self-funded by the College.

The facility is planned to meet the demands of the growing Health Science and Nursing programs by creating expanded opportunities for clinical space and the ability to shift academic offices from the Ghosh Science Building, allowing for this space to be converted to laboratory space. The need for this space was validated by the recent space utilization study completed by Rickes Associates as part of the comprehensive master planning initiative.

The expansion and increased demand for Allied Health programs is the result of successful partnerships between the WSC, other public colleges and the community. The college anticipates an increase in upper division transfer students in science and health-related disciplines due to recent efforts to update and create articulation agreements with Quinsigamond and Mount Wachusett Community Colleges. WSC is under pressure, internally and externally, to meet the needs of those students moving through the public higher education system in Massachusetts.

Over the past decade, the City of Worcester has experienced a tremendous increase in the demand for professionals in the areas of biotechnology and health-related industries. Program growth in these areas, particularly in nursing, has been limited by a lack of clinical laboratory and practice sites. WSC has a long-standing nuclear medicine technology program in collaboration with University of Massachusetts and a *three plus three* accelerated pharmacy program articulation with Massachusetts College of Pharmacy. Other science baccalaureate degree program partnerships with clinical agencies, which are critical to supporting the growth of the healthcare industry in Worcester, are currently under development at the College. Among these programs are baccalaureate concentrations in biology, (green) chemistry, and biotechnology, which will allow for concentration in critically needed clinical areas, such as histology (microscopic analysis of tissues), radiation oncology and medical technology. The College has also developed a new graduate nursing program leading to certification as Public Health/Community Health Clinical Nurse Specialist (first class graduated in 2004) and has created internships in Public Health for science and Allied Health majors in the community.

In keeping with our mission to serve central Massachusetts residents, WSC is also working toward the establishment of a *Successful Aging Center*, which would work in collaboration with the College's *Intergenerational Urban Institute* to serve the community and allow for student clinical practicum experiences. Health screenings and health education would be integral components of this Center. Current Health Science and Nursing faculty (nurse practitioners and clinical specialists) would foster mentoring relationships with students while providing community service in this environment.

There is a natural connection between Allied Health and Health Science programs. This study will also explore the viability of incorporating existing Health Science programs into a new facility. Currently, these programs are offered in an aging gym building. It is anticipated that this would provide for additional clinical experiences for students in

health-related majors. In addition, the College is currently limited to the number of laboratory science courses it can offer due to space limitations. This affects both science majors and students in health-related disciplines whose programs of study include prerequisite and co-requisite laboratory sciences. By relocating health-related program faculty and classroom space to the Academic Wellness Center, the College would be able to build out much needed additional laboratory space, allowing more students the opportunity to enroll in these majors and subsequently attenuate the demand for professionals in the health-related fields in Worcester and beyond.

A new Academic Wellness Center addresses the growing demands of the College's Allied Health programs in addition to providing an adequate facility for basic athletic programs in accordance with all athletic standards and requirements. The existing gym building is 48 years old and built to serve 400 students; current enrollment is 5,440. The existing facility does not meet NCAA requirements for ceiling height or Title IX requirements for women's athletic programs. The facility is no longer included in campus tours out of concern that it will deter prospective students who are graduating from high schools with better equipped facilities.

Similar to Westfield State College's Woodward Center, WSC is looking to create an effective and efficient collaboration between the academic programs in the Allied Health fields and the athletic and recreation needs of a residential college campus. This project is on the Eva Klein study (2003) and is a high priority project on the master plan recently completed by Chan Krieger Sieniewicz.