

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO SUSPEND ADMISSIONS TO THE Ph.D. PROGRAM IN  
HEALTH AND SPORT STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to suspend admissions to the Ph.D. Program in Health and Sport Studies in the Graduate College.

**Executive Summary:** The request to suspend admissions to the Program is due to the fact that there is a need to restructure the graduate programs in Health and Sports Studies. This request was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to pursue “educational excellence and impact.”

**Background:**

- ◇ **Description of department.** The Department of Health and Sport Studies offered a Bachelor of Arts Program in Health and Sport Studies with two selective admission tracks – health promotion and sport studies. The department also offered a Master of Arts Program and a Ph.D. Program in Health and Sport Studies with two specialization areas – (1) psychology of sport and physical activity and (2) sport studies. In June 2010 (Agenda Item 4j), the University of Iowa received approval from the Board of Regents to terminate the Department of Health and Sport Studies. The two tracks in the Bachelor of Arts Program in Health and Sport Studies were split – the health promotion track and one faculty member were moved to the Department of Integrative Physiology because the programs and faculty share a study of human physiology; the sport studies track and two faculty members were moved to the Department of American Studies to provide a broader context for the sport studies major. The two graduate programs were moved to the Graduate College.
- ◇ **Description of program.** The Ph.D. program offers specializations in either Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity or Sport Studies. The Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity program integrates an examination of the psychosocial aspects of participation in sport and physical activity with an analysis of the health consequences of a sedentary lifestyle. The Sport Studies graduate program offers a critical cultural studies approach to an understanding of sport in its historical and contemporary contexts, especially as it pertains to diversity and social equity.
- ◇ **Reason for proposed suspension of admissions.** During its assessment, the Graduate Education Task Force indicated that the Health and Sport Studies graduate programs lacked sustainable viability and student interest and overlapped with other graduate programs. Further discussions identified the possibility of merging these graduate programs into reconstituted departments within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Currently, the sport studies focus area (M.A. and Ph.D.) is undergoing integration into the M.A. or Ph.D. programs in the Department of American Studies. Similar discussions are underway regarding relocating the psychology of sport and physical activity focus area into the newly-approved Department of Health and Human Physiology (Agenda Item 4h, June 2010). The closure of the Department of Health and Sport Studies and the recommendation to merge the focus areas of these graduate programs into other departments led to the proposed request to suspend admissions to the Ph.D. Program in Health and Sports Studies.

- ◇ Impact on resources. The University expects some administrative cost savings from closing the Department of Health and Sport Studies and merging the graduate programs into existing departments. Additional cost savings will be realized in the form of graduate student stipend and tuition support that would have been allocated to newly admitted Ph.D. students during the time of the suspended admissions. Department of Health and Sport Studies faculty and staff are being relocated into the existing Department of American Studies or the new Department of Health and Human Physiology. There will likely be some reduction in staff and concentration of facilities as the mergers occur.
- ◇ Impact on workforce. The proposed program termination is not expected to affect the workforce needs of the state because plans are underway to have the focus areas accommodated through other departments.
- ◇ Alternative programming. Students will be able to pursue the sport studies focus through the Ph.D. program in American Studies. Plans are under discussion for students to pursue the psychology of sport and physical activity focus area through the Department of Health and Human Physiology.
- ◇ Program availability elsewhere. The Ph.D. in Health and Sport Studies is not offered at other post-secondary institutions in Iowa. Several CIC<sup>1</sup> programs offer graduate work in Kinesiology or Physical Education. Iowa has a unique focus on the cultural studies approach to sport studies which will be well integrated in American Studies.
- ◇ Effect on current students. Currently enrolled students will have the opportunity to complete their degrees under the current degree major description (Health and Sport Studies) or transfer to another degree major, such as American Studies. Once the proposed suspension of admissions is in effect, the faculty can concentrate on mentoring the current students toward the successful completion of their Ph.D. program and on working toward the restructuring of the graduate programs.
- ◇ Student data. During the past five years, there has been an annual average of 15 applications and an annual average enrollment of 16.6 students. During that timeframe, there have been nine graduates from the program.
- ◇ Effective date of termination. If the proposed suspension of admissions to the Ph.D. program is approved by the Board, the suspension will become effective immediately.

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<sup>1</sup> Committee on Inter-institutional Cooperation.