



**THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234**

**TO:** The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

**FROM:** Sarah S. Benson *Sarah S. Benson*

**SUBJECT:** Maria College of Albany (Maria College) – Master Plan Amendment for the M.S. program in Occupational Therapy

**DATE:** July 2, 2020

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** *Sharam L. Talae*

**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Decision (Consent)**

Should the Board of Regents approve a master plan amendment for Maria College to offer a proposed Occupational Therapy leading to the M.S. degree?

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

Required by State statute.

**Proposed Handling**

The issue will come before the Full Board for action at its July 2020 meeting.

**Procedural History**

A Master Plan Amendment is necessary as this is the institution's first program at the master's level.

**Background Information**

Maria College requested approval to offer an M.S. program in Occupational Therapy. Currently the College has an existing A.A.S. program in Occupational Therapy Assistant and a B.S. program in Health and Occupational Sciences.

The proposed M.S. program in Occupational Therapy is designed to prepare graduates for entry into careers of service to others as licensed occupational therapists.

The graduates of this program will embody the core values of service, scholarship, justice, hospitality, and diversity. This program is a natural fit to the College's mission and strategic plan, which focuses on vertical expansion in the existing degree programs in the health professions and career-relevant opportunity education. Through the mission, Maria College seeks to "instill in its graduates respect for the dignity of each person and the ability to transform learned skills into caring service."

The proposed program is a blend of theoretical, scientific principles, and practical technology applications and is designed to be in alignment with the state requirements and the accreditation standards. The program is 70 credits and can be completed in two years (six 12-week semesters). The program includes 52 credits of didactic and laboratory coursework and 18 credits (720 hours) of clinical fieldwork placements. Didactic courses include the following areas: occupational therapy domain of practice, assessment of occupational performance, psychosocial factors influencing wellness, professional writing in occupational therapy, developmental occupational theories of education and interventions, assisted technology interventions, topics in research, movement science, and transformative models for intervention development. The clinical experience will utilize an existing community partnership with Jewish Family Service's Albany Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community and other placement sites. To accommodate full-time employed adult learners, didactic courses will be offered in a weekend format. Face-to-face meeting times are scheduled between 4 p.m. - 9 p.m. on Fridays, and 8 a.m. -6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays and will be supplemented with asynchronous online learning. In the final two semesters, students complete 9 credits (360 hours, 30 hours each for 12 weeks) clinical experience each semester in a regular Monday-Friday week schedule.

Qualified applicants must possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with a minimum GPA of 3.2. Students will be required to have completed the following prerequisite courses: Anatomy & Physiology I and II with Labs, Gross Anatomy with Lab or Neurobiology with Lab, Applied Kinesiology, Sociology, General Psychology, Developmental Psychology or Lifespan Human Development, Statistics, and Research Methods. The applicant must provide a personal essay, two academic letters of recommendation, and supportive documentation showing a minimum of 36 hours of supervised clinical observation. In addition, applicants must complete an interview with the Graduate Program Admissions Committee.

It is anticipated that the proposed program will begin with 20 full time students and increase to a maximum of 32 new students in the fifth year. The College surveyed its current health profession students, of which 90 percent are occupational therapy assistant students. All students surveyed expressed interest in applying to the proposed Occupational Therapy program. The College expects that the diversity of the student body of the proposed program would be consistent with that of the existing health profession programs, 88 percent female, 12 percent African American, 6 percent Asian, 6 percent Latino/Hispanic, and 57 percent White.

The proposed program will be offered both in the College's McAuley Building which consists of an interdisciplinary teaching space with a 40-seat distance learning equipped classroom, a 20-seat classroom, and a dedicated Occupational Therapy

library space. Additionally, planned construction in the Main Building includes the creation of a new didactic lab to be completed by August 30, 2020. The new lab consists of a 1,155 sq. ft. Physical Dysfunction and Technology Lab as well as a 465 sq. ft. dedicated Human Development and Wellness Occupational Therapy lab. Students in the proposed program will utilize current resources and databases, including Rehabilitation Reference Center, DynaMed Plus, Taylor & Francis Online resources, and EBSCOhost E-Discovery Service Database Tool. The College currently has a Program Director and a full-time Assistant Professor. An Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and two full-time faculty members will be hired before the program starts.

Staff members from the Department reviewed the application materials. In addition, as part of the review process, staff members participated in the peer review site visit on December 2, 2019. Based upon the review, it is determined that the proposed M.S. program in Occupational Therapy ~~program~~ meets the standards for registration set forth in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

To determine potential impact on current programs and resources, a canvass of the institutions in the Capital Region as well as all institutions in the state offering occupational therapy programs was conducted to determine potential impact on current programs and resources. No objections were received.

### **Related Regents Item(s)**

As the M.S. award represents Maria College's first use of this degree title, a charter amendment item will be presented before the Full Board at its July 2020 meeting where it will be voted on and action taken.

### **Recommendation**

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approve an amendment to the master plan of Maria College to offer the M.S. program in Occupational Therapy.

### **Timetable for Implementation**

If the Board of Regents approves the master plan amendment, the Department will register the M.S. program in Occupational Therapy at Maria College and the College will proceed to recruit and enroll students.