



University of Toronto

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT AND PROVOST

TO: Planning and Budget Committee

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DATE: December 10, 2007 for January 9, 2008

AGENDA ITEM: 4

ITEM IDENTIFICATION: School of Graduate Studies / Faculty of Medicine: Proposal for a Master of Health Informatics (M.H.I.)

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Excerpt from the terms of reference for the Planning and Budget Committee:

4.4.2. The Committee advises the Academic Board on the planning and resource implications of plans and proposals to establish, disestablish or significantly restructure academic programs. Implications might include significant planning and budgetary changes within the significant effects on other divisions, the University as a whole and the public.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

HIGHLIGHTS:

The proposed Master of Health Informatics (MHI) is a full-time professional graduate degree program to be offered by the Graduate Department of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation (HPME) in the Faculty of Medicine with participation of the Faculty of Information Studies (Executive Summary attached). Integrating the broad spectrum of Health Informatics domains in a world-class graduate level program, the MHI is intended for health sciences practitioners, health professionals and computer or information technologists who share an interest in converging their strengths and skills in the application of clinical, information and communication technologies for solving problems and driving change in health care systems to improve health outcomes.

The initiative to develop the program was funded in the third round of the Academic Initiative Fund (2006-07), with the aim of drawing together expertise currently dispersed across the University. The new program will act as a catalyst to coordinate, integrate, and provide leadership in teaching and research on the effective use of information systems in the health arena. The cooperation between HPME and FIS in offering the proposed program ensures that the very best expertise available at each participating faculty and department is integrated into a MHI program that a) provides the most comprehensive menu of course offerings, and b) encompasses the broad spectrum of Health Informatics domains that unites health sciences and computer/information technologies.

The program was approved by the Health Informatics Curriculum Development Working Group and the Health Policy, Management and Evaluation Curriculum Committee that includes faculty and graduate student representation. The Faculty of Medicine Faculty Council (November 5, 2007) and the Graduate Education Council (November 20, 2007) approved the proposal.

The proposal will be presented to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs Committee on January 8, 2008.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

The Planning and Budget Office has reviewed the budget for the proposed program. The resources necessary to offer the program will be provided by a combination of funding from the Academic Initiatives Fund (AIF) and tuition and BIU revenue generated by student enrolment. The Department of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation and the Faculty of Medicine have committed to provide all the resources needed for this program.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning and Budget Committee concurs with the recommendation of the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs:

THAT the proposal to establish the Master of Health Informatics (M.H.I.) within the Faculty of Medicine be approved, effective September, 2008.

Master of Health Informatics (M.H.I.)

Executive Summary

Health Informatics is a discipline that deals with the collection, storage, retrieval, communication and optimal use of health related data, information and knowledge. It recognizes the role of citizens in their own health care as well as the information handling roles of the healthcare professionals, and is now considered a critically essential and pervasive element in sustainable health care delivery. There is a recognized need for the advancement and teaching of knowledge about the application of information and communication technologies to healthcare - the place where health, information and computer sciences, psychology, epidemiology and engineering intersect.

A Master of Health Informatics (MHI) is proposed as a full-time professional graduate degree program to be offered by the Graduate Department of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation in the Faculty of Medicine (HPME) with faculty members cross-appointed from the Faculty of Information Studies (FIS) at the University of Toronto. The MHI vision is to more comprehensively integrate the broad spectrum of Health Informatics domains in a world-class graduate level program. The MHI is intended for health sciences practitioners, health professionals and computer or information technologists who share an interest in converging their strengths and skills in the application of clinical, information and communication technologies for solving problems and driving change in health care systems to improve health outcomes. The academic goal is to produce clinically and technically savvy solution architects capable of bridging the knowledge and cultural gaps that are pervasive in the clinical and health care delivery sectors.

The full-time class-room learning program will require the completion of 10 FCE courses, including a 600 hour practicum. The program will be 16 months in duration over four consecutive sessions. Expected total enrolment the first year will be 20 students with an anticipated increase of 5 students per year to a maximum of 40 students. Since it is a unique program with few competitors, the program is expected to attract students from across Canada and internationally.

The program was included as a key initiative in the most recent (2004-10) HPME Departmental Academic Plan. It responds to the values and mission articulated in the University's *Stepping Up* Academic Plan as well as the Faculty of Medicine Academic Plan and its development was supported by the Academic Initiative Fund (AIF) in 2006. HPME views the MHI as complementary to current academic programs such the M.Sc. Health Administration and MHSc Health Administration. The proposed MHI differs substantially from these existing HPME programs in its emphasis and content, intended audience, and inter-faculty design.