

AGENDA ITEM 29
CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST
FOR RECOGNITION OF
ROSS UNIVERSITY
will be sent under separate cover

MEDICAL BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE REPORT ISSUED: October 27, 2010
ATTENTION: Medical Board of California
SUBJECT: Recognition of International Medical School
Ross University – Freeport, Grand Bahama Campus
Request to Approve Bahamas Campus for Medical
Education for Semesters Three and Four Only
STAFF CONTACT: Curtis J. Worden, Chief of Licensing

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Approve Ross University's Freeport, Grand Bahama campus to provide medical school education for semesters three and four only at this time. In addition, recommend site visits to Ross University's main campus, the Bahamas campus and several representative teaching hospitals in the United States where students receive clinical training, as part of Ross University's reevaluation by the Board.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS:

The Board recognizes Ross University's main campus located in Dominica, West Indies. In January 2009, Ross opened a branch campus in the Bahamas to provide medical education for the third and fourth semesters of medical school. As a medical school whose primary purpose is to educate non-citizens to practice medicine outside of Dominica and the Bahamas, Ross meets the criteria for the Board's review pursuant to Section 1314.1 (a)(2) of Title 16, California Code of Regulations.

In November 2009, Ross University officials submitted a Self Assessment Report to commence the Board's review process of their Bahamas campus. Medical Consultant Mark Servis, M.D., has been reviewing the school's application. Staff and Dr. Servis requested additional information on two different occasions and the medical school officials provided the requested information.

Staff requests that Board members review Dr. Servis' report and determine whether to recognize the medical education provide to students for the third and fourth semesters at the Bahamas campus.

Alternatively, if the Board requires further information regarding the school's educational resources before you reach a decision, staff will request Ross officials to submit the information for your review during a future meeting. If the Board determines site inspections are necessary prior to making a determination, staff will prepare the necessary documents.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS:

In accordance with Business and Professions Code Section 2089.5, the costs of conducting a site inspection are borne by the medical school applying for the Board's recognition. These costs include all team members' air and ground travel costs within the guidelines allowed by the State, the consultant's daily per diem expense, and the consultant's travel expenses to and from any Board meetings where the team presents its report. Subsection (e) of Section 1314.1 of the regulations requires the medical school to reimburse the Board for the team's estimated travel expenses in advance of the site visit.


The Board has been informed that representatives from Ross University will be available during the meeting to answer any questions you may have concerning the school's medical education program.

If you have any questions concerning this memorandum, please telephone me at (916) 263-2382.

October 26, 2010

Agenda Item 29

To: Linda Whitney
Executive Director
Medical Board of California

From: Mark Servis, MD 
Professor and Associate Dean of Curriculum and Competency Development
UC Davis School of Medicine
2230 Stockton Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95817

Re: Evaluation of the Ross University School of Medicine Branch Campus in
Freeport, Grand Bahama Self-Assessment Report; Application for Recognition in
California.

BACKGROUND

The Medical Board of California (Board) requested a review of materials provided by the Ross University School of Medicine for their branch campus in Freeport, Grand Bahama. These were submitted in a request for recognition for the Freeport branch campus from the Board. Ross University provided an initial Self Assessment Report in January 2009 and several clarifications and additional materials in response to subsequent questions.

Ross University's main campus is in Dominica, West Indies and was founded in 1978. The new branch campus in Freeport opened in January 2009. Ross University's main administrative offices are in North Brunswick, New Jersey. Freeport is 1,356 miles northwest of Dominica. The Dominica campus and the Freeport campus are located 1,902 miles and 989 miles, respectively, from Ross University's administrative offices in New Jersey.

The Dominica campus has been recognized by the Board, but is in the process of being scheduled to be reviewed as part of the regular re-evaluation process for previously recognized medical schools. The Freeport branch campus offers only the 3rd and 4th semesters of a 10 semester Ross University curriculum, or approximately one fifth of the Ross University educational program for medical students. The stated reason for the creation of the Freeport branch campus is its proximity to the mainland United States compared to the Dominica campus and the opportunity for greater clinical exposure during the 2nd year curriculum at the affiliated Grand Bahamas Health Services (GBHS) hospital facility.

This report is based on my review of the documents submitted by Ross University, as well as unsolicited documents and materials submitted by a student at Ross University. The goal of the review was to determine if the medical education received at the Freeport

branch campus meets the requirements of current California statutes and regulations for recognition by the Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ross University branch campus in Freeport, Grand Bahama has provided sufficient documentation to satisfy the criteria in Sections 2089 and 2089.5 of the Business and Professions Code and Section 1314.1 of Title 16, California Code of Regulations. The provided documentation also satisfies the stated criteria of Section 2036 of the Business and Professions Code. Specifically, the Freeport branch campus curriculum provides faculty guided and monitored self-study with temporal and spatial distance learning that does meet the Section 2036 criteria for: "classroom, laboratory, practical and clinical instruction, received and given the person physically present..."

REVIEW

This was a unique review in two respects:

1. As a branch campus the review examined only the 2 semesters or 30 weeks that are taught at the Freeport Branch campus of a four year curriculum based out of the Dominica campus. Therefore in considering whether the program met the California requirements and statutes, it was assumed that these 2 semesters needed to be equivalent to the already recognized curriculum provided at the Dominica campus. These 2 semesters, the 3rd and 4th semesters in the Ross University Curriculum, consist of 30 weeks of Microbiology, 30 weeks of Pathology, 30 weeks of Pharmacology, 15 weeks of Behavioral Science, and 15 weeks of Introduction to Clinical Medicine. Ross University did provide evidence of measures taken to ensure equivalent experiences between these two sites, for example the regular exchange of faculty between sites and the sharing of content through distance learning. Indeed, the course syllabi provided for the Freeport Branch campus courses is identical to the Dominica campus. The primary method used for delivering content at the Freeport campus, the Progressive Academic Education Program (PACE), is used by a small proportion of students at the Dominica campus. Ross University was able to demonstrate that they have adequate monitoring and documentation of student learning in the PACE program, particularly the 20 hours of weekly self-study that students are typically expected to engage in as part of the PACE curriculum, to assure that the students at the Dominica and Freeport campuses are having equivalent learning experiences.
2. Distance learning, both spatial and temporal, is an integral part of the PACE curriculum and is the primary method of learning used in the student self-study process. The PACE program typically includes 2 hours of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) small groups, 3 hours of simulation, and 2 hours of Team-Based Learning (TBL) small groups each week, in addition to the 20 hours of student self-directed learning. Ross University's description of TBL and PBL teaching, and associated faculty development, is consistent with US LCME accredited medical school standards. Similarly, Ross University's use of distance learning meets the LCME accreditation standards applied to US medical schools.

The following is a detailed assessment of the School's Freeport campus for the third and fourth semesters based on the relevant California statutes and regulations and on the School's responses to the Self-Assessment Report.

Business and Professions Code Section 2089

Section 2089 requires the medical curriculum to extend over four years or 32 months of actual instruction. The Freeport campus offers the same courses that are part of the already approved Dominica campus curriculum. Therefore the Freeport campus appears to meet this requirement. Section 2089 also requires a minimum of 4,000 hours of course instruction with 80% actual attendance. The Freeport campus curriculum constitutes a total of 810 possible hours out of a probable total of 4,050 in the Ross University 4 year curriculum (assuming the same weekly hours of course instruction over the 10 semesters). The 600 hours of independent self-study of the 810 total hours of instruction at the Freeport campus are necessary to achieve the 4,000 hour minimum standard. Ross University has an evaluation mechanism for tracking "attendance" in this portion of the curriculum. Consequently it appears that the Freeport campus meets the 4,000 hour minimum requirement for course instruction, and for the PBL and TBL portions of the curriculum there is a mechanism for assuring that the 80% attendance requirement is being met.

Business and Professions Code Section 2089.5

The documents provided by Ross University for the Freeport campus do not address instruction in any clinical courses, which are the focus of Section 2089.5. It should be noted that there are clinical experiences at the affiliated Grand Bahamas Health Services (GBHS) hospital during the third and fourth semester curriculum at the Freeport campus. Elements of this instruction are referenced in the affiliation agreement with GBHS and are consistent with the provision of relevant and appropriate clinical instruction and experience provided to second year medical students. Supervision and curriculum oversight of these clinical experiences are discussed in the GBHS affiliation which has been provided. Assuming that the approved Ross University four year curriculum meets or exceeds the minimum requirements in Section 2089.5, the Freeport campus is in compliance with this statute.

California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Division 13, Section 1314.1

Most of the applicable portions of Section 1314.1 are encompassed by the prior approval of the Dominica campus, as Freeport is only a branch campus for a pre-clinical portion of the curriculum. The school does have a clearly defined mission statement with educational goals and objectives.

As required in Section 1314.1, the administration and governance system allows the institution to accomplish its objectives and the faculty have a formal role in curriculum oversight and evaluation of student progress. There is an adequate number of faculty at

the Freeport campus for the size of the program. The faculty credentials indicate that they are qualified to teach their respective courses and fulfill their roles.

Admissions criteria apply only to the Dominica campus and students self select after admission for entry into the Freeport campus.

The institution's financial resources are adequate to accomplish its mission. The Freeport campus facilities are up to date with adequate technology and library resources to support distance learning and TBL and PBL teaching. There is common space provided for student wellness and student affairs activities. Faculty and administration offices are provided for advising and mentoring students and there is administrative support for student records.

Summary

In summary, I believe there is sufficient documentation to support the application for recognition of the Freeport Campus as a branch campus of Ross University's Dominica campus. Specifically, the portions of the curriculum reproduced at the Freeport campus are equivalent to the PACE program already used for a portion of the Dominica campus students. The school provides adequate measures to monitor student participation and progress. The TBL, PBL and distance learning used at the Freeport campus is in compliance with accepted LCME accreditation standards.

Unsolicited materials provided by a Ross University student, were also reviewed for this report. The student alleges that the Freeport campus, because it uses distance learning, was developed so that Ross University could enroll more students, thereby earning a greater profit. The student also alleges that the quality of medical education at Ross University has deteriorated and that the clinical education is below average because of limited clinical spots, but these allegations are relevant only to the Dominica campus. While concerning, I did not find the student's allegations and supporting documentation applicable to the Freeport Campus review. The materials provided do not indicate that the student was ever a student at the Freeport campus, and it appears the student completed five semesters at the Dominica campus.

My recommendation is based on the already established content of the PACE program at the Dominica campus, therefore I would strongly recommend that the Dominica campus be site visited in the near future and that the PACE program be carefully reviewed. The allegations from the student including the statement that there is "no one-to-one professor-student interaction at Ross University," can also be investigated. While the Dominica campus should be the focus of a site visit, it would be advantageous to also visit the Freeport campus to verify what is documented.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the materials from Ross University concerning the Branch Campus in Freeport, Grand Bahama.