

Appendix I

Request for Authorization to Establish a Master of Arts Degree in Environmental Studies at UNC Wilmington

Introduction

UNC Wilmington requests authorization to establish a Master of Arts in Environmental Studies degree (CIP 03.0103) in August 2008.

Program Description

This interdisciplinary professional master's program offered by the Department of Environmental Studies will be targeted at students who completed undergraduate programs in environmentally-related fields as well as in-service environmental professionals with relevant academic grounding. It will provide a blend of focused study within the core environmental field (12 credit hours) and specialization in a particular area (Environmental Education and Interpretation, Coastal Management, Environmental Management, or Individualized Study) as well as a capstone of dual field-based and campus courses. The program will provide a balance of scientific background necessary for sound environmental decision-making within the context of educational, political, sociological, economic, and legal frameworks.

Program Need

Environmental positions are one of the fastest growing job sectors regionally and nationally, accounting for \$200 billion in annual revenues and more than one million jobs. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics cites this as a growing employment field, noting that "a bachelor's degree is adequate for a few entry-level positions, but environmental scientists are increasingly needing a master's degree in a natural science." Anticipated growth of the occupation in North Carolina is comparable to other high-growth areas such as computers and healthcare. UNCW's Department of Environmental Studies has approximately 200 undergraduate majors and 25 graduate certificate students. A survey indicated that 38 percent of the undergraduates would apply to such a master's program. A survey of Environmental Studies internship agencies found 65 percent have employees who would be interested in the master's program. All higher education members of the NC Alliance of Environmental Science and Studies Programs have indicated their support for this master's program and their willingness to direct their students to it. It is anticipated that after four years the program will have an enrollment of 25 full-time and 5 part-time students.

Resources

The program will be housed in the newly renovated Friday Hall. Current facility, technology and library resources are adequate. Using enrollment growth funding, one new faculty member will be added each of three years starting in 2009-10.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the UNCW request to establish an MA in Environmental Sciences degree (CIP 03.0103) in August 2008.