

APPENDIX J

Request for Authorization to Establish a Master of Science Degree in Disaster Management at UNC-Chapel Hill

Introduction

UNC-Chapel Hill requests authorization to establish the MS in Disaster Management degree (CIP 11.0802) effective July 2007.

Program Description

The purpose of this degree is to help responders (e.g., emergency management, emergency medical services, fire fighting, law enforcement, security, business continuity) to acquire the skills and adaptive expertise needed to succeed in the management and coordination of response and recovery to disasters. The curriculum has been designed around (1) the knowledge that disaster managers must acquire, and (2) the skills for adaptive expertise: critical, strategic, systems, ethical, and creative thinking; problem solving; decision making (analytic and intuitive); and leadership. A successful national disaster management program depends upon a cadre of professional disaster executives and managers who have the flexibility, the creativity, and the meta-skills to adapt to any emergency or disaster. Consequently, the curriculum is heavy on decision analysis, analytic methods, and command and leadership skills. This degree is being offered in the distance (executive) format so that cohorts can be drawn from a national pool of qualified applicants who are currently employed in disaster management occupations or who have relevant experience and want to move into disaster management. The distance education format will enable students to continue working as they acquire new knowledge and skills, often an important option for mid-career professionals and critical for organizations who desire to keep valuable employees on the job.

Program Need

A review of extant resources (e.g., statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor; articles; websites of professional organizations; and interviews) indicates that for the most part, first and second responders and those responsible for the development and implementation of disaster management services are under-prepared to deal with catastrophic events. Even though the Federal government has played a major role in disaster preparedness through its requirements for the development of standards and its Office of Homeland Security, the overall infrastructure of disaster management undergirded by education, training, and certification in disaster management is inadequate. Training is critical to maintain a well-informed and competent workforce that can respond to natural and man-made disasters.

Resources

Infrastructure to support the online MSDM program is largely in place, and the Department also has faculty, program staff, and mechanisms in place for admissions screening, registration, and student advising. Staff members are available (program manager, program coordinator), the Department (registrar and assistant registrar, office assistants, technical support) and within the School (technical support) to provide faculty and students with the assistance necessary to conduct the MSDM program effectively.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the UNC-Chapel Hill request to establish the MS in Disaster Management degree (CIP 11.0802) effective August 2007.