

APPENDIX J

Request for Authorization to Establish a Bachelor of Arts Program in Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Asheville

Introduction

General Administration was notified of the intent to plan a Bachelor of Arts program in Religious Studies (38.0201) at The University of North Carolina at Asheville on May 11, 2005.

Program Description

UNCA has had a minor in Religious Studies since 1999. The Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies is an interdisciplinary program that will be housed in a newly proposed Department of Religious Studies at UNCA. Consistent with the institution's liberal arts mission, UNCA proposes a Religious Studies degree program to assist students in developing expertise in understanding the varieties of religious experiences in the world. The academic study of religion is an independent discipline with its own method of investigation. Such study lends itself to interdisciplinary coursework, and an academic department focused on religious academic study. Students pursuing study in the proposed degree will take courses in History, Philosophy, Cultural Anthropology, and the Politics of Religion. The goals of the proposed baccalaureate are for students to understand diverse world religions in their historical and cultural settings, become familiar with diverse approaches to the study of religion, critically examine the influence of religion upon individuals and societies, and be prepared for graduate and professional study in religion and related fields.

Program Need

The proposed bachelor's degree in Religious Studies builds on UNCA's liberal arts mission and its attempt to connect traditional liberal arts fields through interdisciplinary studies. The proposed Religious Studies degree program will provide an opportunity for students to learn more about diverse religions and the political and social conflicts that sometimes emerge. There are not any such religious studies programs in western North Carolina. Students' interests and enrollment in Religious Studies continues to increase at UNCA. With the newly proposed Department of Religious Studies, it is anticipated that enrollment will increase significantly. Moreover, the proposed Department of Religious Studies will strengthen other academic departments on campus and furnish faculty expertise in the Humanities, the Honors, and the Master of Liberal Arts programs. Some courses in religious studies are expected to be cross-referenced with History, Classics, Literature, and/or Philosophy. It is projected that there will be 20 majors in four years.

Resources

The majority of the faculty who will teach in the proposed Religious Studies program are already on faculty at UNCA. The proposed program will require two new faculty hires that will be funded through 101 continuation and enrollment growth budgets. This year UNCA's library received additional resources to purchase books for the proposed and related programs. The proposed academic department will be housed in an existing classroom building which also houses the Departments of Classics, History, Philosophy, and Foreign Languages.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the request to establish a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religious Studies at The University of North Carolina at Asheville effective August 2007.