

APPENDIX H

North Carolina State University Request to Establish a Doctoral Program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media

Introduction

Following a recommendation from the Graduate Council and from the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs approved on November 13, 2003 the request from North Carolina State University to plan a doctoral program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media. North Carolina State University now seeks approval to establish a doctoral program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media (CIP: 30.9999) effective August 2005.

Program Description

The institution describes the new program as follows:

The interdisciplinary program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media (CRDM) will offer doctoral training that integrates the study of oral, written and visual modes of communication within the context of changing technologies and cultural relations. This integrated approach is a necessary response to the ongoing transformation of human communication practices as information and communication technologies (ICTs) evolve. The digital revolution has made possible new combinations of print, sound, and visual elements. And the convergence of various communication media—print, telephone, television, Internet—has created new contexts, new problems, and new uses for human communication. These changes require an equally dramatic shift in theory, instruction, and research to address the influence of these technologies and to influence the process of their development. Integrating the disciplines that address written, oral, and visual modes of discourse and symbol use will produce a powerful academic program positioned to address the communication practices and problems of the digital age.

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences can complement and enhance the ability of other research programs at NC State to make positive contributions to new technology and the world that it is creating. A recent essay in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* noted, “The humanities have a central place in exploring the possibilities, the reach and implications, of digital technologies and cultures.” The new technologies require an interdisciplinary approach that combines methods of research, theory, and critical analysis and helps students cultivate their abilities to evaluate and shape technologically supported communication practices in various domains of practice. Without attention to the human dimensions of information technology, its transformative potential will be incomplete and ineffective.

The proposed doctoral program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media will educate researchers, teachers, and analysts who can address issues raised by ICTs in the workplace, in government, in education, in everyday life. The program will draw from traditions of research and disciplinary definition in both the humanities and social sciences, and provide students with intellectual resources from the traditionally separate disciplines of oral, written, and visual communication. Students will examine the history of communication technologies and their relationships to social and cultural developments and explore the connections between communication networks and financial, military, social, cultural, and political networks. They will study how the interactions between communication practices and technologies are related to institutions, identity formation, cultural values, social practices, and economic conditions. They

will analyze policy issues concerning systems of ownership and governance that drive the development, distribution and use of these technologies and they will apply a variety of theoretical and analytical frameworks for understanding, interpreting, and evaluating these issues.

Program Review

The review process is designed to surface strengths and weaknesses in proposed new degree programs. Proposals to establish new doctoral programs are reviewed internally and externally. The concerns from the two review processes were summarized in a letter to the Chancellor prior to the presentation to the Graduate Council. That summary follows:

The reviewers recognize many strengths of the faculty proposing this new doctoral program and see few difficulties in its being successfully established. There are some suggestions in the narratives that you will want to review and there are some items that may need more comment and attention. After recognizing the strength of the core faculty, reviewer 2 identifies some areas in which expansion would be a good idea: computers and composition and new media, human-computer interaction, and technology design for writing, new media, and other areas identified in the review. This reviewer also comments that the area of visual rhetoric and design is not well developed for the proposal.

Reviewer 1 raised issues about the connection of the program to what is occurring in business and law, and whether greater effort should be made to involve those areas.

Finally, concerns were raised by both reviewers about resource support for the technology aspects of the program. The location of the program with other programs that are not always recognized as needing a lot of technology support could make it more difficult for the program to get the resources it needs. The reviewers' point is that for this program to be successful it will need support at a different level than typical humanities programs.

Graduate Council

The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, the proposal to establish the program, copies of the outside reviews of the program, the summary letter to the Chancellor, and a presentation to the Council by representatives of the program.

Response

NCSU's response to the reviewers' comments focused on current expertise and new faculty hires to meet subject areas needs and on new approaches to technology support for this new doctoral program. Searches are in progress in the following areas: computers and composition, CMC-interpersonal, technology and media, and the SAS professor of technical communication. NCSU currently has faculty expertise in visual rhetoric, usability, and technology and writing. There is also current expertise in media law and future hiring is anticipated in media law and ethics. Inter-institutional registration opportunities will be available for students to complement their work at NCSU with resources available at other institutions.

The campus has reviewed the technology needs for this new program and is prepared to fully support the program requirements. A program-specific technology plan has been developed that includes a technology support person for the program, a dedicated technology classroom, a research lab, and office/lab facilities for graduate students.

Recommendation by the Graduate Council

After consideration of the issues raised by reviewers and Council members, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval to establish this doctoral program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Communication.

Need for the Program

The change in the environment for communication and rhetoric is permeating all aspects of our lives, both professional and personal. This program is being designed to recognize this fact and to build a new doctoral program without the organization or intellectual barriers that may be present in many existing programs. Evidence has been presented that there will be student demand for this program and that the graduates will have a wide range of opportunities.

Resources

The campus response has addressed the additional resource needs identified by the reviewers.

Recommendation

One reviewer concluded, "I hope that this Ph.D. program is mounted. It would be a step forward for the UNC system and something to fill a need in the array of Ph.D.-granting programs in communication nationwide...The vision is clear and compelling."

The Office of the President recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from North Carolina State University to establish a doctoral program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media effective August 2005.

Approved to be Recommended to the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs of the Board of Governors

Senior Vice President Gretchen M. Bataille

November 2, 2004