

APPENDIX E

Request for Authorization to Establish a Master of Arts in Religious Studies Degree at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Introduction

UNC-Charlotte notified the UNC Office of the President of its intent to plan a Master of Arts degree in Religious Studies (CIP# 38.0201) on June 12, 2001. The university requests authorization to establish the program in January 2003.

Program Description

The proposed degree program is intended for students who wish to continue the academic study of religion at the graduate level. Students will pursue the degree (a) to prepare for graduate work at the Ph.D. level; (b) to prepare for teaching at community colleges or for adjunct teaching at colleges and universities; (c) to prepare for professional work in non-academic positions; or (d) to continue their liberal arts education at the graduate level. The program will cross-list courses with master's programs in Liberal Studies, English, History, and Sociology. The Department of Religious Studies has a deep commitment to international studies and multi-culturalism in education, with faculty who specialize in religions of East and South Asia, Middle East, Africa, Europe, and the Islamic world. Comparative courses present a broad understanding of diverse cultures that goes beyond the religious dimension.

Program Need

This program has been identified in UNCC's academic plans as a priority for development. The number of undergraduate religious studies majors at UNCC has doubled within the last ten years, and in one survey over 70 individuals indicated interest in enrolling in the program. Within four years enrollment in the program is anticipated to be 8 full-time and 30 part-time students. The program will enhance campus diversity, as African Americans have constituted more than 40 percent of the students in recent undergraduate Religious Studies seminars. Religion, although extremely important to the history, culture, and politics of the United States, receives only limited attention in public education. The program will meet a significant societal need for liberally educated citizens who understand the relationship of religion to public life. In addition to preparing students for advanced graduate study and teaching, the program will provide graduates with knowledge useful in vocational fields such as social work and counseling, broadcast and print journalism, law, international business, and foreign service.

Resources

No new faculty positions are required. Facilities and library holdings are adequate, and the department will have additional space as new buildings funded from the bond referendum are constructed. Enrollment increase funds generated after the first three years of the program will be sufficient to meet any additional costs.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the request to establish a Master of Arts in Religious Studies degree at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte effective January 2003.