East Carolina University
Request to Plan a Doctoral Program in Technical and Professional Discourse

Introduction
East Carolina University requests approval to plan a doctoral program in Technical and Professional Discourse (CIP: 23.1101).

Program Description
The program seeks to examine discourse in all its manifestations. Thus, a major impetus for the proposed degree can be found in the changing views of communication. Older models view communication as preparing printed documents (static information) or oral speech (dynamic information). Such models view communication as a linear process bounded by a specific logical premise. As a consequence of emerging new technologies and techniques, however, those models have been called into question. While information can still be viewed as either static or dynamic, the channels and media used for communication have expanded or changed dramatically. Computers, for instance, have the potential to assume many functions previously available only to video. At the same time, the possibility of relatively seamless international communication obviates the idea that communication, as well as learning, occurs only in specific physical domains. Time and space collapse in this new view of communication as an integrated discourse system, and such concepts as self-paced and distance learning, global markets, decentralized workplaces, and the like have become realities.

Implicit in exploring this concept is the premise that a new view of communication needs an intellectual center in which to flourish. That center should be a doctoral program based in an institution that has strong professional programs already in place. Such a degree would have as its raison d'être the study of the impact of emerging new information technologies and techniques on discourse in the professions. Given the variety of professional programs at ECU, the degree could incorporate courses from several professional departments and disciplines, and any of the conceptual content or research venues of participating units would be suitable subjects for dissertation material. Hence, it is particularly appropriate that this program be viewed as a multi/interdisciplinary program.

Three concentrations are planned for the proposed degree: technical and professional discourse; teaching, writing, and discourse; and discourse studies. The program will be housed in the Department of English for administrative purposes because two of the concentrations (technical and professional discourse, along with teaching, writing and discourse) have well-established courses to serve as the core for those particular concentrations, a core which will be supplemented with courses from within the department, from other departments within the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as from schools outside the college. While the multi/interdisciplinary nature of the propose

concentration in general discourse studies makes it impossible to enumerate all possible foci of study, however, in virtually any scholarly field, doctoral students could examine research methods and/or the historical basis for the acquisition of knowledge. In conjunction with courses in other departments or disciplines, such students could focus their study on the implications of discourse within that field.

Program Review
The review process for requests to plan is designed to determine if the proposal is developed to the stage appropriate for taking to the Graduate Council and if so what are the issues that may need further attention. Proposals to plan doctoral programs are reviewed internally. The concerns from the reviewers were summarized in a letter to the Chancellor prior to the presentation to the Graduate Council. That summary follows:

While a lot of attention is given to the focus on the intersection of technology and discourse, not as much is given to the other two areas, technical and professional discourse, and teaching, writing, and discourse. There was a concern about the status of the concentration at the master's level in this area. There was concern also expressed that it was not clear how the "multi/interdisciplinary" aspect of the program would be actually developed. How the program is structured will be relevant to which current faculty will be directly involved and the areas in which projected hiring would occur. Attention needs to be given to the core focus of this program and avoid developing a program that tries to do too many things. Budgetary issues need to be addressed very carefully, since the proposal seems to suggest that funds beyond what might be based on enrollment growth will be needed. As you know it is difficult in most instances to get any special funding for new programs, so there would need to be an internal commitment to fund these needs by reallocation.

Typically doctoral programs are built on strong programs at the master's level and assessment of proposals for establishment focus explicitly on this question. This needs to be addressed and the authors may want to consider making the next step a strong master's program in this area as a basis for developing a doctoral program.

In this case assistance was sought from external reviewers who confirmed that there is likely a good pool of potential students and plenty of opportunity to place graduates of this type of program since industry will compete with the academy for graduates.

Graduate Council
The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, ECU's proposal to establish the program in Technical and Professional Discourse, the summary letter to the Chancellor, and a presentation to the Council by representatives of the program. In addition to the issues raised previously, the following concerns were expressed by Council members: What is the gap between graduates being produced and job opportunities, what form will the internship take, how are other programs involved in this program, how much of the program is online, and what are the residency requirements? Also more information was sought about the current master's program and the load of faculty who would be teaching in the program.

Response
The representatives indicated there was much more graduate activity at the master's level at ECU than the proposal may have communicated with several candidates focusing their degree research in this area.

While there has been general exploration of the role other programs would play in the degree no firm conclusions or agreements have been reached at this point. They expect to involve faculty from other programs in the planning effort, if approved.

Need for the Program
There are a relatively small number of English Departments that specialize in doctoral level work in the proposed areas. The field has the advantage that graduates can find employment either in the academy or in business or government. The program makes a case that there are more positions than there are doctoral graduates being produced in this field. Given the needs in government and business this likely is the case but it needs to be more carefully demonstrated. ECU has been offering work at the master's level and receives many inquires about the availability of degrees in technical and professional writing. It would be the only doctoral level program in North Carolina and one of two in the South.

Recommendation by the Graduate Council
After consideration of the issues raised by previous reviewers and Council members, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval for ECU to plan a doctoral program in Technical and Professional Discourse.

Issues to Address in Planning
All the issues raised by the reviewers and by Council members would need to be explored in detail. In addition, the resources needed and their source would need to be made very explicit. It will be particularly important to communicate the type and level of activity currently taking place in the English master's program.

Recommendation
It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the request from East Carolina University to plan a doctoral program in Technical and Professional Discourse.