

Request for Authorization to Establish a Master of Arts in Public Policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill requests authorization to establish a Master of Arts in Public Policy degree program (CIP code 44.0501).

Program Description

The Department of Public Policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill requests permission to establish a non-admittance master's degree option for its existing doctoral program in Public Policy. Master's degrees are commonly offered en route as part of doctoral programs in many other disciplines nationally. There are only a handful of Ph.D. programs at UNC-Chapel Hill without an authorized master's degree option, which is believed to be solely an administrative oversight when the doctoral programs were requested and approved. The current proposal aims to correct this oversight for the Ph.D. in Public Policy program.

The proposed degree is intended to provide a master's degree option for students who have been admitted to the Ph.D. program in Public Policy. The degree would not offer courses separate from the existing doctoral curriculum and thus will not require additional courses, equipment, facilities, or faculty. The curriculum is consistent with the Public Policy doctoral program and will meet all University, Graduate School, and accreditation requirements.

An authorized master's degree is requested for two primary, limited purposes: 1) providing an option for the occasional student who has achieved a high level of knowledge and competence in their field, but for any of a number of reasons – change of career goals, health, financial, family obligations, or academic performance – is unable to complete the full requirements of the Ph.D. degree, and 2) an opportunity to reward students for their incremental achievements and to give them a greater competitive edge when entering the job market. Students who earn the master's degree for either purpose will have demonstrated scholarly competence in their field through their coursework and other academic requirements.

Relevance to Institutional Mission and Strategic Plan

Graduate study by its nature provides direct benefits to the University's mission to contribute, through its research, teaching and service, to the needs of the people of North Carolina. Faculty and graduate students are directly engaged with developing and evaluating solutions to societal problems and identifying innovative ways of improving the quality of life for the public.

Adding the proposed master's degree option also provides a stronger academic program for the students, part of UNC-CH's institutional mission and strategic planning efforts. The master's degree option will strengthen the current doctoral program by adding a well-defined milestone that will signal significant progress toward degree completion. The faculty believes the creation of a master's degree option will improve the existing doctoral program by making it more attractive to prospective students. Additionally, having the authorized master's degree option will make program graduates more competitive on the job market when looking for professional positions in their field.

Resource Implications

No new resources or facilities will be needed to offer this program.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve this request from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to establish a Master of Arts in Public Policy degree program (CIP code 44.0501) as described above.