

**Request for Authorization to Establish a
Doctor of Philosophy in Public History program at North Carolina State University**

North Carolina State University requests authorization to establish a Doctor of Philosophy in Public History degree program (CIP 54.0105).

Program Description

Public historians include museum professionals, government and business historians, historical consultants, archivists, interpreters and administrators and historic sites and parks, teachers, cultural resource managers, curators, film and media producers, policy advisors and oral historians. North Carolina State University has offered an M.A. in Public History since 1982, with 85% of program graduates finding positions in the field. While the M.A. will remain a serviceable degree for entry-level jobs, the aim of this proposed program is to train graduate students who are highly qualified to provide leadership in research, innovation, and development of public history initiatives in public and private sectors, as well as in higher education. The Doctor of Philosophy in Public History degree program requires 72 credit hours, including core requirements (12 hours); designation of a General Field such as Early American, Modern American, Southeast Asia, etc. (12 hours); a Public History field such as archive management, museum studies, etc. (18 hours); a Concentration Field such as law and political culture, race and ethnicity, etc. (9 hours); an Interdisciplinary Field of either non-profit administration, architecture, or parks, recreation and tourism management (9 hours); and a minimum 12 hours of dissertation credit. Core requirements include a 3-hour practicum experience.

Mission Relevance

North Carolina State University's mission notes that its historic strengths in agriculture, science, and engineering are enhanced by a "commitment to excellence in a comprehensive range of academic disciplines." The proposed program furthers the institution's land-grant mission by contributing to the heritage tourism base of North Carolina's economy and the practice of historical activities with the public audience foremost in mind. The program also aligns with several goals of the institution's Strategic Plan, including to enhance interdisciplinary scholarship (Goal 3) and to enhance local and global engagement through focused strategic partnerships (Goal 5).

Student Demand

The demand for doctoral training in public history is evidenced by the growth in programs across the country. In 2006, two universities in the country offered a Ph.D. in Public History, with nine other doctoral programs in history offering a public history specialization. By 2012, seven universities offered the Ph.D. in Public History and seven additional doctoral programs in history have added a public history specialization. In addition to attracting M.A. graduates seeking career advancement in the field, North Carolina State University expects their planned certificate programs in Native American and African American public history to serve as a unique draw into the doctoral program. African Americans and Native Americans are underrepresented in the public history profession.

Societal Demand and Opportunities for Program Graduates

The U.S. Labor Department estimates that employment opportunities in historic sites, historic parks, museums and heritage institutions are expected to increase by 32% from 2008-2018. Job advertisements posted between 2004 and 2010 by three professional societies in the field were analyzed and, over that time period, showed growth in the total number of public history jobs advertised (68%) as well as growth in the number of positions requiring a Ph.D. (225%).

Resource Implications

New resources required to launch the program include one faculty member, one SPA staff to assist with program administration, and graduate assistantship support. Should enrollment growth funding be unavailable, the Office of the Provost has committed to provide the necessary support through internal reallocations.

Existing library, facilities, and information technology resources are adequate for the launch of the program.

Collaborative Opportunities

No other doctoral programs in public history exist in the state. M.A. students in public history currently have the option to pursue a dual degree with the master's programs of the School of Information and Library Science (SILS) at UNC Chapel Hill. The opportunity also exists to expand such collaborative activities with SILS at the doctoral level.

Outcome of Consultation with Disciplinary Experts

In February 2012, the program was presented to the UNC Graduate Council. Council members asked clarifying questions about the market for graduates of the proposed program, enrollment projections, and the changing nature of museums and public interaction with information. Presenters reiterated that museums are not the only outlet of employment for their graduates, and they described opportunities that exist in the public and private sector, as well as in higher education. North Carolina State University's expertise in and existing collaborations with digital humanities, computer science, and gaming are particular strengths that will help prepare program graduates for the changing nature of museums as well as for positions in the academy, heritage tourism, and elsewhere. Presenters confirmed that they will enroll from the master's, and not the baccalaureate, level and that they will invite applications from other master's level programs in public history across the system. The Council voted without dissent to approve the program.

The Request to Establish was reviewed by three independent external reviewers. As a whole, external reviewer comments were favorable and noted several strengths, including the available talent pool; the partnerships planned for the Interdisciplinary Fields; and the Native American and African American Public History Certificates that would make the North Carolina State University program distinctive nationally. Reviewers suggested the level of professional expertise of the program's faculty could be strengthened; this comment likely reflects a debate in public history as to whether former professionals or academicians are best suited to instruct in public history programs. The program faculty suggested that their professional experiences in consulting, curating, interviews and field work are equal to or surpass that of other peer programs. They have proposed that one new faculty hire is required to launch the program and aim to hire an individual with professional administrator experience. Reviewers also questioned whether the 150-hour internship requirement and the required teaching assistantships provided sufficient professional development for students. The program responded that the 150-hour internship requirement is modeled after four other peer programs. While teaching assistantships are the only stipends available at this time, these assistantships will provide students with useful public history skills in effective organization and communication of historical knowledge. Finally, reviewers wanted to see more attention to scholarly approaches and products that would distinguish a degree in public history from a degree in history. The program is extremely interested in exploring and encouraging alternate forms of scholarship as well; but the program is currently constrained by North Carolina State University Graduate School policies which require doctoral candidates submit traditional written dissertations in order to obtain the Ph.D. degree.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve North Carolina State University's request to establish a Doctor of Philosophy in Public History degree program (CIP 54.0105) effective August 2014.