

APPENDIX M

University of North Carolina at Greensboro Request to Establish a Doctoral Program in Geography

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 May 11, 2001 the request from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to plan a doctoral program in Geography. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro now seeks approval to establish a doctoral program in Geography (CIP: 45.0701) effective August 2004.

Program Description

The proposed PhD in Geography at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro will be an innovative doctoral program designed primarily for persons who are preparing for careers which apply geographic theory, method, information technology and other skills to solving problems in urban and regional planning, natural resource management and environmental assessment, demographic analysis, and economic development. The emphasis of an applied doctoral program in geography grounded in research will build on the foundations of the two highly-regarded undergraduate applied concentrations in Urban Planning and Earth Science/Environmental Studies, the successful Master's in Applied Geography program, and the new Certificate in Geographic Information Sciences (GIS), which began fall 2001. Those considered for admission to the PhD program will have completed the M.A. degree or 36 hours of graduate work in geography (including up to six hours in a related field). The doctoral program will have a more advanced and research-oriented application of geographical concepts and theories to solving real-world problems than does the M.A. degree program.

Clusters of courses, which focus on three aspects of applied geography, will anchor the PhD program. These three clusters are the geographic information sciences (GIS), urban and regional economic development and planning, and earth science and natural resource management. These cluster areas reinforce one another because of the integrative and multi-disciplinary nature of the discipline.

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:

Internally there was concern that there was not enough attention to demonstrating both the pool of potential applicants and the opportunities for graduates of the program. Here I think the issue was whether there would be growth in demand for doctoral trained as

opposed to master's trained graduates. The reviewers speak to this issue and certainly indicate considerable opportunity for graduates. It still might be worthwhile addressing this issue in the proposal.

One reviewer points out that in the focus on the applied dimension of the program, there may have been an omission of discussion of what preparation there will be for students who may want or have an opportunity to accept an academic appointment. That reviewer thought that many departments might start looking for faculty with an applied focus.

One reviewer was concerned that the curriculum was not as fully developed, as it should be. Are the areas well defined in terms of specific courses the students will choose for each area, and are there enough specialized and elective courses? The reviewer raised the possibility of courses cross-listed with undergraduate courses, but, while that might be appropriate for some master's level courses it would not seem appropriate at the doctoral level. It would be helpful if this section were addressed again with attention to both organization and depth of coursework.

Another issue was the need to ratchet up the level of research and grant activity. I think that is an expectation all around but it is not really very explicit. I think the reviewer would have liked to see this recognized and planned for a little more explicitly. Perhaps this is another issue that should be addressed explicitly.

There have been some concerns expressed by the internal and external reviewers about resources. One review indicates that some of the cost may be estimated too high (hardware, software, and equipment maintenance) and others may be too low (faculty salaries plus start-up cost). There was not much detail about what was needed to upgrade the library holding and what the cost would be. Some sections of the narrative seem to suggest that there are things needed that cannot be provided internally yet ultimately all the cost are to come either from reallocation or from enrollment growth. One of the reviewers was a little concerned about the status of the commitment to the program. This is another area in which some additional attention to this set of issues would be helpful.

I would like to note and compliment you on the success you have had recruiting women and minorities into your geography programs, and hope that continues, if this program is approved.

Graduate Council

The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, UNCG's proposal to establish the program in Geography, 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. The discussion did not raise issues in addition to those identified by previous reviewers.

Response

The representatives responded to the concerns about the curriculum by providing a detailed account. There would be 48 to 54 hours required beyond the master's degree with two courses in each of the three cluster areas, two additional research courses in one of the cluster areas, three research methodology courses and a dissertation of fifteen to twenty-one hours. There will be a number of elective courses available for students who may desire further work in an area.

Those students who may seek an academic appointment would be well versed in research methodology even with the applied emphasis and would likely be candidates only for applied positions. In addition, teaching assistants would gain experience teaching labs and introductory courses in a situation in which they would be mentored in their teaching.

The representatives described the research level at this point in the development of the department and the many sources from which they had gained research funding. Faculty teaching in this new program will have a course load reduction from 3/3 to 3/2 with a corresponding increase in research expectation. Research should expand with the availability to have the assistance of highly trained doctoral students present on projects.

Need for the Program

Geography is one of those areas that has more positions than doctoral graduates to fill the positions. The Association of American Geographers Newsletter's job listings for PhDs saw the ratio for jobs advertised to PhDs granted rise from 1.5 in 1991 to 2.0 in 1999, and most of the positions have been in applied areas such as GIS, Urban, and Environmental. Both external reviewers confirm the growth of enrollment in geography programs and the good market both in and out of the academy for geography doctorates. UNCG has a strong master's program in Geography that has been quite successful in placing its graduates. The Department reports that they have 60 master's students enrolled, another 75 master's students are enrolled in other programs in North Carolina, and almost 2,000 students are enrolled in master's program outside the state, which would appear to provide a good pool from which to recruit doctoral students. Many of the graduates of their applied master's program have been placed in government, at all levels, or businesses in North Carolina, or elsewhere.

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 Geography.

Resources

Having built a strong master's program in Geography, the department will need only a small increase in library holdings for Geography, and space needs can be handled with some internal reallocation. The basic needs are for two new faculty and funds to support graduate students. The Provost has committed \$100,000 for graduate student support and

a like amount to hire two faculty members. The other needs are modest and funds appear to be available from program growth to meet them.

Recommendations

While the outside reviewers raised a number of concerns and made a number of suggestions they concluded: (Reviewer 1) A strong department has presented a well-conceived proposal. The proposal focuses on the areas of geography that have a strong market demand and student demand now and in the foreseeable future. The proposed program will effectively leverage benefits from a very modest additional expenditure. The proposed program has excellent potential to be recognized as a national leader in applied geography and to become one of UNC at Greensboro's signature programs." (Reviewer 2) "At the outset, note that I strongly support instituting a PhD program in Geography at UNC-Greensboro. I believe that UNCG Geography has identified a significant niche in proposing a PhD in Applied Geography...Indeed, I believe a new PhD in Geography at UNCG will lead to synergies which will significantly benefit Geography at both Greensboro and Chapel Hill, based on recent experiences elsewhere (e.g. Texas and Kansas)...creating a win-win situation for both departments, the universities in which they are housed, and the State of North Carolina."

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the request from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to establish a doctoral program in Geography effective August 2004.