

**Request for Authorization to Establish a
Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies
(B.A., CIP 30.0000) at
Elizabeth City State University**

I. Program Highlights

- Rigorous, interdisciplinary program designed for individuals who have begun, but not completed, their college careers, with emphasis on skills for advocacy in the interest of the public good.
- Requires general education core, interdisciplinary studies core, a focus area (business, sociology, psychology, health, reason and argument), and a track. Tracks include politics/government and law; humanities; service for the aging; politics, economics, rhetoric and law; culture and society; Africana studies, public health; social and behavioral sciences; STEM and health; children/community services; children and family development; cultural citizenship; or other individualized track.
- Option would exist for students to complete degree online
- 124 credit hours
- 35 full-time, 18 part-time students projected at steady state
- Resources needed to launch the program are minimal, as no additional personnel are required. Modest levels of supplies and materials, communications, printing and advertising, travel, and equipment will be achieved through reallocation of institutional resources.

II. BOG Academic Program Planning Criteria (UNC Policy 400.1)

1. **Existing Programs (Number, Location, Mode of Delivery).** Several UNC institutions offer similar degree programs that provide flexible pathways to a baccalaureate degree, particularly for part-way home students. They include: ASU B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies; East Carolina University B.S. in University Studies and B.A./B.S. in Multidisciplinary Studies; NC A&T State B.A. in Liberal Studies; NC Central B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies; NC State B.A./B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies; UNC Asheville B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies; UNC Greensboro B.A./B.S. in Liberal Studies; UNC Pembroke B.I.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies; UNC-Chapel Hill B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies; WCU B.A./B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies; WSSU Bachelor's in Interdisciplinary Studies. Several are approved for online delivery, including ECU's University Studies program and programs at UNCG, UNCP, and WSSU. UNCP and NC A&T State are approved for off-site delivery locations as well.
2. **Relation to Campus Distinctiveness and Mission.** The proposed program aligns with the ECSU mission "to promote economic, social, and environmental progress for the people of northeastern North Carolina, the state, and the nation...through teaching, research, and community engagement, the institution's rich heritage and its current multicultural student-centered focus provide a firm foundation for its endeavors. It serves the needs and aspirations of individuals and society; producing graduates for leadership roles and life-long learning." The program is designed to provide a pathway to degree completion for current and part-way home ECSU students.

APPENDIX I

- 3. Demand (Local, regional, state).** To determine need for the proposed program, ECSU administered needs assessments to five targeted groups: partway home and former ECSU students; area community college students; personnel at Norfolk area military institutions; personnel at the Elizabeth City Coast Guard base; working adults living 25-75 miles from ECSU. Their study design required a minimum of 100 questionnaires to be collected for each group, although some groups exceeded this target. Results revealed significant demand across all groups. For example, of the 124 surveys completed by persons at the U.S. Coast Guard base, 73% (98) indicated some interest in the program, and 69% (68) indicated if the program were offered, they would seek to enroll within a year. The proposal detailed similar levels of response and interest in the other categories surveyed. The highest interest came from partway home and former ECSU students (those who did not complete at ECSU between 2005 and 2012). Of the 104 surveys collected from this group, 77% expressed interest, and 72% indicated they would consider enrolling within one year. When surveyed about their interest in online degree delivery, 58% of partway home respondents favored an online degree offering through ECSU. Only 19% of partway home respondents had interest in completing an online degree elsewhere. Projected enrollments align with those of other similar existing programs in UNC.
- 4. Potential for Unnecessary Duplication.** Although there are a number of existing similar programs in the UNC system, the scope of opportunity with part-way home student populations is significant. Additionally, some in ECSU's native student population may elect to pursue this degree for an interdisciplinary experience that suits their needs and interests and that they cannot access through other degree programs on the campus.
- 5. Employment Opportunities for Graduates.** According to NCWorks, more than 40% of all jobs in North Carolina require a bachelor's degree, with top desired skills being problem-solving, decision-making, flexibility, and interpersonal skills. The proposed degree would prepare graduates with a strong foundation in liberal arts and sciences and civic responsibility that is well suited for application in a wide range of fields. Targeted occupations of a program graduate may include Child Welfare Worker; Community Outreach Coordinator; Volunteer Coordinator; Community Development Officer; Human Resources Specialist; Public Health Agent; Policy Analyst; Compliance Officer; and many more. The proposal included detailed analyses of these and other position titles available in North Carolina and northeastern North Carolina, including numbers of positions and salary ranges, as well as a detailed national employment matrix for related industry profiles.
- 6. Faculty Quality and Number.** Eleven core faculty from psychology, sociology, social work, education, management, criminal justice, history, and public health will direct the launch of the program.
- 7. Availability of Campus Resources (library, space, etc.).** Facilities, library, and information technology resources required to launch the proposed program are in place and adequate. Blackboard is ECSU's online course delivery system.
- 8. Relevant Lower-level and Cognate Programs.** As noted above, the proposed program draws upon existing faculty and coursework from a large number of departments at ECSU. The program will be housed in the Department of Social and Behavioral Science.

- 9. Impact on Access and Affordability.** The proposed program provides another affordable access point and opportunity for degree completion for partway home students.
- 10. Expected Quality.** The proposed program builds off of existing courses and faculty expertise in place at ECSU. Currently, 54% of the courses identified for the program have been offered online at least once since 2013, with the average number of online offerings per course at 2.7 since 2013. In fall 2016, another 18% of the courses were offered online, leaving about a quarter of remaining course offerings for initial online development and delivery. A recent survey of ECSU students in online courses showed high satisfaction levels (75-82%) with academic advising, career services, registration, and financial aid services online.
- 11. Feasibility of Collaborative Program.** As noted above, the interdisciplinary nature of the degree program requires significant cross-campus collaboration at ECSU. Flexible degree programs such as this one require significant attention to student advising that does not readily lend such programs to inter-institutional collaborations. Additionally, data showed that partway home students with some credits from ECSU preferred to complete at ECSU.
- 12. Other Considerations.** None.

III. Summary of Review Processes

Campus Review Process and Feedback. The proposal was reviewed by the ECSU Faculty; Midlevel and University Curriculum Committees; Academic and Administrative Councils, and the ECSU Board of Trustees. No issues, concerns, or opposition was raised throughout the campus process and comment periods.

UNC General Administration Review Process and Feedback. Throughout the review process, ECSU responded to questions from UNC General Administration regarding the curriculum requirements and presentation, faculty, program delivery considerations, program administration, and budget. Reviewers from four UNC system institutions evaluated the proposal and in most response categories found the proposal “acceptable” or “acceptable with some considerations.” Reviewer questions centered on the distinctiveness of interdisciplinary and general studies programs, skills and career pathways, and faculty support and development to teach in the program. ECSU responded that, although an interdisciplinary studies core is required, the program is designed to offer the flexibility needed for students with high transfer credit hours. They also pointed to data collected that indicates many ECSU partway home students sought a major that better matched their life/career interest and needs. ECSU clarified that courses throughout the program may include experiential learning components but that all students will have an appropriate experiential learning and interdisciplinary skill-building opportunity through the final capstone course. They provided additional information about how faculty will be prepared to advise students and to teach the introductory and capstone interdisciplinary studies courses.

Benefits of program approval include high leverage of existing faculty, resources, and curriculum capacity to meet an identified need of the ECSU service area. For these reasons, we do not recommend any alternatives to implementing the degree program.

IV. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve Elizabeth City State University's request to establish a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Interdisciplinary Studies degree program (CIP 30.0000) to enroll students starting Spring 2017.