New Program Proposal
Ph.D. in Professional Communication
(Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design)
Clemson University

Summary

Clemson University requests approval to offer an interdisciplinary program of study leading to the Ph.D. degree in Professional Communication (Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design), to be implemented in August 2005. The new program will be the first doctoral degree offered by faculty in the College of Arts and Architecture at Clemson University. Despite the parenthetical inclusion of three disciplinary terms in the degree's subtitle, the program is designed as a unified, multi-disciplinary degree without tracks.

The Board of Trustees at Clemson University approved the program on October 24, 2002, at its regular meeting. The President of the institution approved the program on April 20, 2004. The proposal was submitted for Commission review on April 22, 2004. The proposal was reviewed without substantive comment by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs at its meeting on July 15, 2004.

The purpose of the program is to prepare graduates with excellent skills in written, oral, and visual skills in written, oral, visual and multi-media professional communication. The emphasis in the program will be on preparing students for taking professional positions, either in the private sector for promoting sophisticated communications or as members of the collegiate/university professoriate as teachers and researchers of communications. The program is designed to provide both in-depth theoretical understanding of the theory of different modes of communication and the knowledge and skills of modern, sophisticated technologies of communication.

The need for the program grows out of the rapidly expanding national and international need for communication and information management experts, from the demonstrated success of the masters degree program in this field at Clemson University, and from the success of the few similar extant doctoral programs in the United States. The demand for communications experts is evident, according to both the narrative and the external consultant's report, in both the for-profit private sector and in the academy as teachers and researchers. The proposal refers to a report by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2000 in which it is stated that by 2006,

one-half of the American workforce will be working in businesses which are either major producers or consumers of sophisticated information products and services.

As required by CHE policy, the institution contracted for and received an external review of the proposed program done by a national expert in the field. The review was positive and supportive of Clemson University's proposed program, both with regard to affirming the need for it and the capacity of the institution to carry it out. The curriculum will consist of a minimum of 36 semester hours of coursework, a comprehensive examination, and 18 hours of dissertation research coursework, and the dissertation. Students are required to select five core courses, five cognate courses in a specialization, and six semester hours of studio research or applied project work. Ten new courses will be added to the catalog of courses at Clemson for this program; none of these courses appears to imitate in content the coursework found in the Ph.D. programs of Mass Communications or English at USC-Columbia.

There is one Ph.D. at University of Central Florida in Texts and Technology which is somewhat like this one in the Southern region. There are four programs similar to this in the nation, although none is quite the same in its emphasis. No other program exists in South Carolina like the proposed program, although USC-Columbia has a Ph.D. in Mass Communications (largely focused on journalism) and a Ph.D. in English, both of which bear some relationship to the proposal. This proposal, however, places much heavier emphasis on the theoretical understanding and empirical implementation of the technological aspects of, and technology in, communications than the USC-Columbia programs.

Three new faculty members will be necessary to initiate this program. These faculty members will be added, one each year, in years two, three, and four of the program's operation. A total of 26 faculty (5.875 FTE) will work in the program when it is fully implemented. Faculty assigned to this program represent an interdisciplinary team from three different departments (English, Communications Studies, and Information Design) within the College of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities at Clemson.

Enrollment in the proposed program is estimated to begin at eight headcount students (6.66 FTE) in FY 2005-2006 and increase to 32 headcount students (29.33 FTE) in FY 2009-2010. Estimates are based upon the number of students in similar programs in the country to the one proposed by Clemson and to the historical enrollment patterns in Clemson's master's program in the same area. If the enrollment projections are met, the program will meet the current CHE program productivity standards.

No specialized accrediting body exists in this field. Thus, the program will not seek any national professional accreditation.

Equipment and software now available at Clemson are adequate to begin the program, but the proposal notes that these resources will need to be continually upgraded. Likewise, new office space will be required for Graduate Teaching Assistants, as they near completion of their careers as doctoral students.

Both the narrative and the consultant's report emphasize the need for significant upgrading of the library resources in subject areas within this degree program over the first five years of the program's operation. The budget for library upgrading is modest in this regard, but the narrative notes that significant funding for library and software/hardware upgrades are anticipated from grants received by participating faculty members in the program. While the narrative does not mention it, the implementation expected in January 2005 and thereafter of the South Carolina Electronic Library's anticipated statewide high-level databases, and of the anticipated statewide universal borrowing through the statewide virtual union catalog, will also be of immense benefit to this and other doctoral programs in the state.

New costs for the program are estimated by the institution to begin at $245,000 in the first year of the program's implementation and to rise to $730,981 in the fifth year. Total costs estimated for the program during its first five years are $2,624,558. These costs include program administration ($530,914); faculty ($476,043); graduate assistants (1,265,000); clerical support ($66,364); equipment ($106,183); library resources ($53,091); facilities ($42,000); recruitment ($7,964); professional development ($35,000); and student support ($42,000).

Shown below are the estimated Mission Resource Requirement (MRR) costs to the state and new costs not funded by the MRR associated with implementation of the proposed program for its first five years. Also shown are the estimated revenues projected under the MRR and the Resource Allocation Plan as well as student tuition.

Year	Estimated MRR Cost for Proposed Program	Extraordinary (Non-MRR) Costs for Proposed Program	Total Costs	State Appropriation	Tuition	Total Revenue
2004-05	$271,240	0	**$271,240**	$0	$60,934	**$60,934**
2005-06	596,728	0	**596,728**	72,146	133,440	**205,586**
2006-07	922,216	0	**922,216**	158,639	205,947	**364,586**
2007-08	1,193,456	0	**1,193,456**	245,131	265,615	**510,746**
2008-09	1,193,456	0	**1,193,456**	316,694	265,615	**582,309**

These data demonstrate that if Clemson University meets the projected student enrollments and contains costs as they are shown in the proposal, the program will not be able to cover new costs with revenues it generates by the fifth year of its implementation.

In summary, Clemson University will offer an interdisciplinary doctoral program leading to the Ph.D. in Professional Communication (Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design) that will be the first doctoral program offered through Clemson's College of Arts and Architecture. This degree will permit students to assume positions of professional responsibility in either the for-profit private sector as users, producers, and designers of information specialties; or in colleges and universities as scholars/researchers of communications and communications theory. Information and information design specialists are in great and growing demand in the information-based economy of the 21st Century. The new program is not duplicative of either the Ph.D. in English or the Ph.D. in Mass Communication which are both offered at USC-Columbia.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission approve Clemson University's proposed program leading to the Ph.D. degree in Professional Communication (Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design) for implementation in August 2005, provided that no unique cost or other special state funding be required or requested.