

**TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ART  
AT WESTERN STATE COLORADO UNIVERSITY**

**PREPARED BY: DR. IAN MACGILLIVRAY, DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC  
AFFAIRS**

**I. SUMMARY**

This item recommends approval for Western State Colorado University (WSCU) to offer a Master of Arts in Art degree.

**II. BACKGROUND**

**COMMISSION AUTHORITY**

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is defined in §23-5-129, which states that:

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education...

(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create, modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.

**OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM**

The following is summarized from WSCU's proposal:

The M.A. in Art with a Gallery Management and Exhibits Specialization (MGES) professional degree program will prepare students for careers in arts management, art gallery and art museum management and directorship, exhibits specialization, academia, and for further study or professional development in the discipline. The MGES program will follow the blended, low-residency model of current Western graduate programs, with fall and spring standard semesters and two residencies. Students commence the program with a required residential orientation and

practicum, online coursework (fall and spring), a required residential internship (spring or summer), a portfolio of program projects, and a capstone project (spring or summer). The MGES program will require a total of 30 credit hours, taking thirteen months to complete full-time (part-time options are available). If approved by the CCHE, this program will commence in the fall of 2016, allowing sufficient time following program approval for marketing, recruitment of students, hiring of faculty, and program implementation.

Additional information on this proposed degree, unrelated to fit with statutory role and mission, is in Appendix A.

### **ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT**

This degree supports WSCU's statutory role and mission, which states in part:

*...Western state Colorado university shall offer undergraduate liberal arts and sciences, teacher preparation, and business degree programs and a limited number of graduate programs... C.R.S. 23-56-101*

### **III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that WSCU's proposed Master of Arts in Art degree is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The WSCU Board of Trustees approved this program on October 23, 2014. This would be the sixth graduate program offered by Western since regaining statutory authority for graduate degrees in 2007.

### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends that the Commission approve Western State Colorado University's proposal to offer a Master of Arts in Art.**

### **V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

Copies of all relevant materials are on file in the Academic Affairs Division and are available upon request.

### **STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

C.R.S. §23-5-129 Governing boards - performance contract - authorization – operations

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education:

(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create, modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.

## **APPENDIX:**

Appendix A: Supplemental Information

### **APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

This supplemental information is unrelated to the proposed degree's fit with the institution's statutory role and mission. The following is summarized from the institution's proposal:

#### **EVIDENCE OF NEED**

Market demand is directly reflected in the increasing number of relatable programs offered online. Some of these offer their hybrid programs via collaboration between academic departments and continuing education/extended studies offices. Our research indicates that similar hybrid programs are self-supporting, profitable, and capable of engaging substantial numbers of students.

We have developed several partnerships that will support the market attractiveness of the program and lead to student recruitment (preliminary memorandum of understandings (MOU's) under preparation). We plan to further expand such partnerships in the sector, including working with employers at art galleries and museums to create MOU's supporting employee professional development through completing degree requirements within the parameters of their positions. This strategy (currently being employed to recruit for the Master of Environmental Management program) will serve to recruit students, create demand for the program, and center WSCU as a hub for a network of strategic partnerships in the arts. We have already initiated several potential relationships that will be further developed upon approval of this proposal.

## **DUPLICATION**

In researching other programs in the region, it appears this proposed program targets an as-yet untouched niche market. Surveying the landscape, the majority of similar graduate programs offer traditional residential *museum studies* degrees or certificates. We found very few comparable *gallery management* programs, and these were not as extensive, rigorous, or practically-based as that proposed here, or did not offer the flexibility of online courses.

Other programs with concentrations related in principle to that proposed here are residential and typically offer certificates rather than university graduate diplomas. No programs such as that proposed here are offered in the Four Corners region. Our program is distinctive from the discipline-related programs researched, because of our focus on arts and gallery management and exhibits specialization, broad practical real-world skill development, and our relative accessibility, affordability, and flexibility.