

**TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MEDIA STUDIES AT UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER**

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

**I. SUMMARY**

This item recommends approval for University of Colorado Boulder (UCB) to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies.

**II. BACKGROUND**

**COMMISSION AUTHORITY**

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review and approval of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is defined in §23-5-129(6)(b), which states that new and modified program proposals shall be reviewed and approved only on the basis of fit with the institution's statutory role and mission.

**III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

**OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM**

The following is summarized from UCB's proposal:

We are proposing the creation of a bachelor of arts degree in Media Studies that would be dedicated to examining ways of thinking about and conducting research into the intersection of media, communication and cultural practices in historical and contemporary perspective. Encompassing humanistic, social scientific and artistic approaches to the study of media and culture, and interdisciplinary in its theoretical and methodological approaches, the new degree would span traditional boundaries between theory and practice. It would foster media "literacy" in the broadest sense by providing students with the critical skills to analyze contemporary media and culture, along with technical, aesthetic and intellectual principles that facilitate strong media practices.

The goal of a BA in Media Studies is to prepare students to become intellectually engaged critics of their media environment through a commitment to rigorous scholarship, civic engagement and creative media practice. Media Studies students

will exit the program with a vital edge as innovative, critical professionals, media-savvy citizens and well-rounded, independent thinkers.

One vital component of this degree will be course work that teaches undergraduates not only to navigate and critically evaluate the value of messages in a complex web of information, but also how to effectively participate in the media as an exercise in responsible citizenship in a democratic society. Using a critical pedagogy approach, this course will lead students to scrutinize their media experiences and acquire new competencies in researching and clearly articulating their thoughts in an evolving multimedia environment.

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 UCB's statutory role and mission, which states:

*(a) The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall be a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall offer a comprehensive array of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado has exclusive authority to offer graduate programs in law. The Colorado commission on higher education, in consultation with the board of regents, shall designate those graduate level programs that are the primary responsibility of the Boulder campus of the university of Colorado. The university has the responsibility to provide on a statewide basis, utilizing when possible and appropriate the faculty and facilities of other educational institutions, those graduate level programs. The commission shall include in its funding recommendations a level of general fund support for these programs. [§ 23-20-101, C.R.S.]*

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that UCB's proposed degree is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission, meets Pathways requirements and meets the 120 credit cap requirement for bachelor's degrees. University of Colorado's Board of Regents approved the program at its September 11, 2014 meeting.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends that the Commission approve University of Colorado Boulder's proposal to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies.**

**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

**Employer Demand:** The Media Studies major prepares students for government and private industry careers, analyzing and evaluating media and developing media policy—for jobs as media practitioners in the public and private sectors. Graduates of the program in the former School and Journalism and Mass Communication that the new BA updates have obtained positions in public relations and promotions for private industry non-profit organizations, in reporting and in teaching. Others have pursued graduate degrees in mass communication and law. A significant number of Media Studies students are double majors (in related fields in Arts and Sciences) and have participated in the honors program. We expect this to continue in the new College, as we will continue requiring that our Media Studies take a significant amount of study beyond their majors in the department, which will enable them to explore vital connections to other disciplines and career paths through course work in other departments in the College and in other Schools and Colleges at CU.

**Student Demand:** At its creation in 1994, the Media Studies emphasis faced certain restrictions: it was capped at 60 students; it was designed not to dramatically change the existing curriculum or to compromise the journalism accreditation mandates; and Media Studies majors were not permitted to enroll in skills-based courses that were required of students in the professional emphases. Due to these constraints, the number of Media Studies majors has remained at 60 students, although courses taught by faculty identified with Media Studies have been popular with students in all of the JMC sequences, including Journalism, Broadcast Production and Advertising. The creation of a Media Studies Department in the new College of Media, Communication and Information, based on a commitment to interdisciplinarity, porosity between units and expanded access to media production courses, will provide an environment conducive to a thriving Media Studies major. With this breakdown of artificial barriers between theory and practice, we anticipate a significant increase in Media Studies majors. Our confidence in the new BA is reflected in the proliferation of Media Studies departments and majors in prominent academic institutions such as MIT, the University of California-Riverside, the University of Virginia, the University of California-Berkeley, Rutgers University, San Francisco University and the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. An example of particular note is the recently established Department of Media, Culture and Communication in the Steinhardt School at New York University. Based on data received from the department, NYU has 750 undergraduates. Since our current Media Studies program has 60 undergraduates, there is clearly room for significant growth.

## **DUPLICATION**

The collaborative reach of CMCI as a whole also explains how CU Boulder's Media Studies degree differs from anything currently offered in the College of Arts and Media at CU Denver. As its name implies, UCD's college focuses on media and art, to the exclusion of all of the other disciplines brought into connection in Boulder's proposed College of Media, Communication and Information. What is more, UCB's Media Studies undergraduates will benefit from the presence of both a long-established cohort of seasoned senior scholars and graduate programs that will enrich their experience while also providing role models in the graduate students they will meet as RAs and TAs. Finally, closer to home, UCB Media Studies has long taught courses in film alongside those offered by CU Boulder's Film Studies program. This relationship has evolved without conflict since, while Film Studies has traditionally approached the history, analysis and interpretation of film considered as a fine art, Media Studies adopts a wider, more historical and social-scientific perspective, relating film directly to broader and deeper trends in society and culture as a whole.