

TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF MASTER OF ARTS IN MEDIA AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AT UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

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I. SUMMARY

This item recommends approval for University of Colorado Boulder (UCB) to offer a Master of Arts in Media and Public Engagement.

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:

The proposed MA in Media and Public Engagement emphasizes a proper balance between academic excellence and social responsibility. Its innovative curriculum offers a critical study of the history, institutions, economics and social implications of the media, nationally and globally, combined with a practice-based media training geared towards civic engagement and community building. MAPE students will learn how to apply skills of critical learning, media criticism and technological innovation to exposing social problems and bringing awareness to public issues that are poorly or never addressed by mainstream media and politics. The program will accept students based on the quality of their projects and their commitment to social change and the public good. With an interdisciplinary critical curriculum and a high-quality technical training in media production, the MAPE program offers students a unique opportunity to select and study in depth a specific social, political or cultural issue. In addition to courses in media theory and other fields of interest, students will learn how to create thoughtful and engaging projects using a variety of media practices, ranging from documentary film and multimedia websites to interactive video installations and other online tools. In the course of two years, students will collaborate with faculty, community leaders, non-profit

organizations and socially engaged corporations to devise innovative pathways to the study, commentary and presentation of social issues.

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. 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 Master of Arts in Media and Public Engagement.

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 Masters in Media and Public Engagement will prepare students for government and private industry careers analyzing and evaluating media and developing media policy and for jobs as media practitioners in the public and private sectors. This program will also prepare students for careers in the non-profit sector both nationally and globally.

Student Demand: Programs in media and civic engagement are becoming popular across the country, as evidenced by the recent launch of successful programs such as the public engagement program at the New School in New York, the Masters in Social Documentation Film and Digital Media at the University of California-Santa Cruz and the Center for Media and Social Impact at the School of Communication at the American University in Washington D.C. We also anticipate that, given the increased freedom of movement students will enjoy within CMCI owing to its founding collaborative ethos, and given the Department of Communication's presence in CMCI's midst, Media Studies will see more graduate students not only taking its courses but also electing to pursue MAPE since they will no longer have to choose a journalism or communication degree in order to take a significant number of journalism or communication courses.

DUPLICATION

We note that the proposed new MA in Media and Public Engagement revises a similar master's-level degree that has already been in existence at UCB since early 1990s. It does not, therefore, cause any substantial new duplication risk to other programs either here in Boulder or in the state. However, this degree will be a unique program in Colorado precisely because of its emphasis on a socially grounded approach to media. The advent of digital and participatory media alters old models of mediated communication, invoking new questions about culture, identity and power. Our goal is to build a solid critical foundation that transcends the hype of new technologies and to provide students with a durable lens through which they can document and analyze the scale and scope of media presence in our daily lives. In the process, the program will equip students to be highly effective participants in a media-saturated public life.

Finally, UCB's MA in Public Engagement competes neither with programs under consideration in UCD's College of Art and Media or in CU Boulder's Film Studies program, if only because it is a graduate level program and neither of these neighboring units offers graduate courses. Moreover, where UCD's College of Art and Media emphasizes artistic

activity and UCB's Film Studies has traditionally approached the history, analysis and interpretation of film considered as a fine art, Media Studies adopts a more historical and social-scientific perspective, relating media arts like film, television or photography directly to broader and deeper trends in society and culture as a whole.