

BACKGROUND AND REQUEST

Miami University/Mahidol University, Thailand International Joint Master's Degree in Population and Social Gerontology

RECOMMENDATIONS

This program clearly meets the Chancellor's standards for graduate degree programs. The Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduate Study recently recommended approval for the new joint degree program, contingent on approval of the program by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. There were no serious concerns raised in the review.

Request: Miami University seeks approval for a joint master's degree program entitled: MU²: Mahidol University, Thailand, and Miami University, International Joint Master's Degree in Population and Social Gerontology.

Program Mission and Background: The proposed program, which is built upon major strengths in each institution, is designed to help students understand the phenomenon and consequences of rapid global aging and to equip students with competencies to address age-related social science issues worldwide. The global focus, as well as the combination of gerontology and population studies, will prepare students to work within the global community of researchers, educators and planners seeking to assess and address the issues of population aging.

Discussions about the joint master's degree program were initiated in 2007 when Mahidol University faculty came to Miami University and were continued in 2008 when gerontology faculty from Miami University visited Mahidol University. During the visit to Mahidol University, Miami University faculty met with Mahidol University's President and with the Vice President for International Development, both of whom publicly expressed support for the program. Since that time, the development of the program has been a collaborative and ongoing effort between the two institutions.

Students will be exposed to theoretical and methodological foundations in two disciplines—gerontology and demography—both of which will prepare them to adopt a variety of educational and professional opportunities in the field of aging. Students will have access to the faculty and resources available in two different educational institutions, within departments that are internationally known for applied and scholarly research. The new joint degree program will complement existing programs at both institutions by attracting a new student population and preparing a new kind of professional. At Miami University, The Department of Sociology and Gerontology and the Scripps Gerontology Center have a strong track record in research and teaching of social gerontology, with a primary focus on aging in the United States, complemented by a recent emphasis on global aging. Mahidol University's Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR) has outstanding capacity in demography and population education, and research of a global scope. Mahidol University's past experience and success in cooperative international degree programs demonstrate their commitment to the internationalization of higher education. Together, the two institutions make ideal

partners for offering a joint degree that will combine their respective and complementary specializations.

Enrollments: Miami University anticipates enrolling 4 to 6 students into the proposed program per year for a maximum capacity of 12 students. Half of these students will study at Miami University, and half at Mahidol University in any given year. Students studying at Miami University will be accommodated in already existing courses (MU² requires only two new courses to the established curriculum—GTY 684: Global Aging and GTY 686: Global Health and Health Care Systems.) This focus on global aging will make GTY 684 and GTY 686 attractive options for a many of Miami University's master's and doctoral students. It is anticipated that the program can and will begin accepting students in Fall of 2010.

Curriculum: Faculty, Facilities and Resources: A fully integrated two-year program is proposed, during which all students who enter together will follow the same curriculum. The program is comprised of 57 credits, including 9 core courses, a field placement/practicum and a thesis. The first year will be spent at Miami University with course work focusing on social gerontology. In the summer after the first year, students will have a supervised field placement or research practicum to be spent either in the U.S. or Thailand. Course work during the 2nd year will be spent at Mahidol University and will focus on research methods, cross-cultural contexts, program evaluation and demography. Thesis work can be completed at either Mahidol University or Miami University. The proposed program will not require new faculty since Miami University plans to accommodate the students in existing classes that are currently staffed and offered regularly. Space/facilities relocation for the proposed program is anticipated for Upham Hall at Miami University. As the program demonstrates success, Miami University will seek external funding support to increase the student capacity of the program. Faculty at both Miami University and Mahidol University are exploring external funding opportunities for students in their second year of the proposed program.

Evidence of Need: Given the rapid growth in aging across the globe, there is a growing need for professionals to shape emergent policies and programs for older individuals in local, national and international contexts. Students who complete this program will be well-positioned for careers in state, national and international organizations that focus on policy, planning, and analysis of service systems for aging populations. No such program exists in the state of Ohio, nor, to Miami University's knowledge, in the United States or anywhere else in the world. The gerontology focus of the program will be the first such formal training in South Asia.