

BACKGROUND AND REQUEST

UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

Doctor of Philosophy in Spatially Integrated Social Science

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION

This program clearly meets Regents' standards for graduate degree programs. The Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduate Study voted approval for the new master's level program. There were no serious concerns raised in the review.

Request: The University of Toledo College of Arts and Sciences seeks approval for a Doctor of Philosophy in Spatially Integrated Social Science degree.

Program Purpose/Mission: The proposed multidisciplinary degree is a cooperative venture between the University of Toledo's departments of Geography and Planning, Economics, Political Science and Public Administration, and Sociology and Anthropology. The program will be designed around the application of geographic information science and spatial analysis to study the spatial dimension of human and social dynamics, including interaction of individuals and society, government, and market participants. The program will enhance the allied social science's role in UT's mission as a metropolitan urban university and will strengthen the university's efforts in outreach, research and education. The rationale for this program is based on a rapidly growing commitment by social and behavioral scientists to incorporate geographic information processing technology to researches that focus on the social, economic, political, ethnic, and cultural elements of changing landscapes ranging from the local to the global scale. Students are expected to come into the program with a Master's degree from one of the allied disciplines comprising the program that include Economics, Geography, Sociology, Political Science, or Anthropology. Graduates of this program will have the ability to perform advanced geospatial research in social science, but it is also anticipated that graduates will serve as a vital link between GI Science technology and the demands of society's decision makers and stakeholders. Graduates are expected to be competitive for positions of leadership in government positions ranging from the national to the local level. It is also envisioned for graduates to be sought for positions in the private sector and consulting organizations.

Enrollments: Current projections will limit admissions to eight fully supported students per year in order to assure adequate funding, resulting in no more than 32 fully-funded students in residence at any time. In some cases, students also will be admitted with no funding assistance. This total should assure minimum enrollments in all required courses and seminars within the program.

Curriculum: The proposed program will require 90 semester credit hours beyond the Bachelor's degree, typically 45 hours of coursework and 45 hours of dissertation. Since the program requires that admitted students already will have completed a Master's degree, 60 credits will be required for the proposed program. Three mandatory core courses are to be taken by all students (9 credit hours), one spatial analysis seminar course from each of the three departments outside of the students' disciplinary affiliation (9 additional credit hours), a remaining set of elective courses (12 credits) will be taken within their disciplinary affiliation to reach a total of 30 minimum credit hours. A minimum of 30 additional credit hours of dissertation completes the student's degree program. It is anticipated that this program will require the development of seven new courses at the 8000 level as well as the dissertation.

Faculty, Facilities and Resources: The proposed program will not request additional financial resources to ensure a successful beginning, and promises to be self-supporting based on the past performance of the faculty. Faculty resources are also adequate given the success in acquiring four additional faculty from the Provost's Hiring Plan. The proposed program will require only additional space, and the Department of Geography and planning has begun an initiative in cooperation with the College of Arts and Sciences to relocate into more adequate space. Salaries for four additional faculty hired for the program are paid out of the budgets of each faculty member's home department.

Evidence of Need: The U.S. Department of Labor Statistics along with the U.S. Geological Survey has recognized a growing demand for individuals possessing technological skills in the processing of geographic information, given the advances technology and the growing proliferation of "readily available, consistent, accurate, complete, and current geographic information and the widespread availability and use of advanced technologies." While a significant portion of the attention devoted to the training of the geospatial technology industry workforce deals with the necessity to train individuals with the requisite technical skills to fill a growing number of job vacancies, it is argued here that producing graduates with advanced technical skills alone are not sufficient; it is also essential to understand the nature of the underlying forces and processes that govern the location and distribution of the phenomena stored and managed in these systems. This is where the social sciences have much to contribute in geospatial technology. The proposed program is unique in its focus and mission, with few other Ph.D. programs offered in the United States, and will therefore satisfy unmet demand for its educational services by drawing from local, regional, national and international pools of prospective students.