

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Board of Regents

**From:** Board Office

**Subject:** Master of Arts Program in Rhetoric, Composition and Professional Communication, ISU

**Date:** July 7, 2003

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**Recommended Action:**

Approve Iowa State University's proposal for an M.A. program in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication.

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**Executive Summary:**

Iowa State University is requesting approval of an M.A. program in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of English.

Focuses on  
Specialized  
Needs

ISU has awarded an *M.A. in English with a Specialization* in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication since 1982. The curriculum in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication has evolved over the years to keep pace with advances in the theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings of the field. Now, with the ever-increasing interface between technology and professional communication as well as the need to be adept at computer-assisted instruction in the teaching of writing, students interested in advanced study in this discipline need a degree that focuses on their increasingly specialized needs. The M.A. in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication would also fill the gap that currently exists between the B.S. in Technical Communication and the Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Professional Communication at Iowa State. Further, having a degree dedicated to the concentrated study of rhetoric, composition, and professional communication promises to attract additional, highly qualified graduate students to the English Department.

Recommended by  
Board Office and  
ICEC

The Interinstitutional Committee on Educational Coordination (ICEC) and the Board Office have reviewed this program and are recommending approval.

No Similar  
Programs in  
Iowa

No other colleges or universities in the state have a graduate major in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication. Although the University of Northern Iowa offers undergraduate minors in both technical and business communication, it does not offer graduate degree programs in the discipline. The University of Iowa has an M.A. program focused only on rhetoric, with little emphasis on composition and no attention to professional communication. The proposed graduate master's program in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication would be the first in the state.

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Regents New  
Program Review  
Questions

The University's response to the Board of Regents New Program Review Questions is attached.

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Robert J. Barak

Approved:



Gregory S. Nichols

## REGENTS PROGRAM REVIEW QUESTIONS–Majors

Masters of Arts in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication

Department of English, Iowa State University

### 1. Need

#### A. How will this proposed program further the educational and curriculum needs of students in the discipline?

This proposed program provides students with a degree that matches in name and in focus the curricular instruction that is currently being provided. That is, since 1982 the English Department has awarded an M.A. in English with a *specialization* in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication. The curriculum in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication has evolved over the years to keep pace with advances in the theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings of the field. Now, with the ever-increasing interface between technology and professional communication as well as the need to be adept at computer-assisted instruction in the teaching of writing, students interested in advanced study in this discipline need a degree that focuses on their increasingly specialized needs.

Furthermore, the proposed program provides students with a degree that meets both national and university needs. Nationwide, the crucial importance of rhetoric, composition, and professional communication as a course of study has been reflected in the number of graduate programs in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication that have emerged across the nation. The Department of English at Iowa State established its own Ph.D. program in Rhetoric and Professional Communication in 1991. At its mandated 5-year program review, this Ph.D. was ranked among the top programs in the nation offering this degree (Report to the Board of Regents, April 1996). The program was cited as a “national leader, an experimental program breaking new ground.”

In 2001, the Iowa Board of Regents approved a B.S. in Technical Communication in the Department of English. This move to establish an undergraduate major in technical communication echoed the establishment of bachelor programs in technical communication at such respected institutions as Carnegie Mellon, Miami University (Ohio), Michigan Tech, Purdue, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, University of Washington, and the University of Minnesota.

Establishing a masters degree in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication at Iowa State would enable the university to claim degrees in the discipline ranging from the B.S. to M.A. to Ph.D. Establishing this degree would also instantiate Iowa State’s mission of reflecting the synergy between science/technology and the liberal arts and social sciences in its programs. As a field of study, rhetoric, composition, and professional communication addresses the natural relationship between science, technology and communication.

The enhanced curriculum and its objectives in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication are more specific to an MA in the field than to an MA in English. In addition, employers of teachers of rhetoric and composition and of professional communicators for business and industry seek candidates with degrees in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication. Having a degree dedicated to the concentrated study of rhetoric, composition, and professional communication promises to attract additional, highly qualified graduate students to our MA program and to provide students with the degree they need. In fact, having a separate degree will help recruit qualified applicants. In terms of curriculum, having an MA in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication would fill the gap that currently exists between our BS in Technical Communication and our Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Professional Communication.

**B. How does it further the educational and curriculum needs of other units in the college and university?**

The proposed program promises to make Iowa State the recognized place to study rhetoric, composition, and professional communication in the nation, with currently the largest faculty in the discipline nationwide and with both graduate and undergraduate programs in the field. The proposed major would also provide graduate students majoring in scientific and technical disciplines at Iowa State with an extremely attractive minor, since employers commonly inquire about applicants' communication skills.

**2. State programs**

**A. What programs in this field of study are available in other colleges and universities in Iowa?**

No other colleges or universities in the state have a graduate major in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication. Although the University of Northern Iowa offers *undergraduate* minors in both technical and business communication, it does not offer graduate degree programs in the discipline. The University of Iowa has an MA program focused only on rhetoric, with little emphasis on composition and no attention to professional communication. The proposed graduate master's program in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication would be the first in the state.

**B. With what representatives of these programs have you consulted in developing this proposal? Provide a summary of the reactions of each institution consulted.**

This program is currently being offered as an M.A. in English by our nationally recognized faculty. There are no comparable programs in the state. Articulation of the present (same as the proposed) curriculum and letters from other regents institutions are included with this proposal.

**C. In what ways is this proposed program similar to those mentioned in A. In what ways is it different?**

In the absence of programs within the state, the department examined undergraduate programs in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication at universities outside the state, and especially at Peer 11 institutions, when putting together this degree program proposal. Comparisons to these programs are included in the program proposal under “similar programs at other universities.”

**D. How does the proposed program supplement the current programs available?**

The proposed undergraduate major at Iowa State provides a masters program that will complement the existing Ph.D. program in the discipline.

**E. Has the possibility of some kind of inter-institutional program or other such effort been explored? What are the results of this study?**

The possibility of inter-institutional programs has not been explored, since the graduate degree in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication at Iowa State will be unique to the state.

**F. Please list the Iowa institutions in which articulation agreements are being developed for the proposed program. (NOTE: This applies only to community college degree programs that may transfer students to this program.)**

N/A

**G. Please provide the Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code for the proposed program.**

23.0401 and 23.1101

**3. Please estimate the enrollment in this program (for the next five years):**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>A. Undergraduate</b>					
Majors	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Non-majors	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>B. Graduate:</b>					
Majors	15	17	20	22	25
Non-majors	3	3	4	6	7

**C. On what basis were these estimates made?**

The figures for majors are based on current enrollment figures in RCPC (Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication) emphasis in the M.A. in English. The emphasis currently has 23 enrolled; we are not claiming an enrollment of 23 to start the M.A., however, because not all students now in the emphasis will graduate under the new catalog and because others will be finishing before a new program is in place. Figures for non-majors are based on non-degree students currently taking classes in RCPC; these figures are also based on the enrollments of similar programs when offered as separate degrees at comparable institutions.

There are currently 136 active students in the Department of English's graduate programs: 39, Ph.D.; 23, M.A. in TESL; and 74, M.A. in English. If we were to offer the proposed M.A. in RCPC, the number of students in the M.A. in English would be reduced by the number opting for the new major, but the overall number of active students in the department of English's graduate programs in the near future would remain roughly comparable to the current number. The department commonly restricts its numbers to those qualified students who would make good T.A.s, and relies on them to provide essential teaching assistance in the department.

**D. What are the anticipated sources of these students?**

We anticipate three main sources for these students: current students from the existing rhetoric and professional communication emphasis in the English department, additional students attracted to the separate degree, and—as graduate minors—students from various scientific, technical and professional disciplines at Iowa State.

**4. Please provide any available data or information on employment opportunities available to graduates of this program in Iowa and nationally. (Such information is available from U.S. government labor sources as well as many professional associations.)**

As indicated in the proposal, the need for such programs from the workplace perspective is supported by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics:

Through the year 2006, the outlook for most writing and editing jobs is expected to continue to be competitive. . . and is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2006. . . . Demand for technical writers is expected to increase because of the continuing expansion of scientific and technical information, and the continued need to communicate it.  
<<http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos089.htm>>

Graduate programs in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication also address the significant changes in the way writing instruction is now being delivered and in the content of that instruction itself. As such, they promise to address the emerging problem of teacher shortages in the areas of writing and professional communication instruction, in schools, the academy, and the workplace.

**5. Are there accreditation standards for this program?**

CPTSC (Council of Professional Technical and Scientific Communication) guidelines are met by this proposed program.

**6. Does the proposed program meet minimal national standards for the program, e.g., Council of Graduate Schools or other such bodies?**

The proposed program meets the national standards of the Council of Graduate Schools.

**7. Please report any reactions of the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education.**

Proposal was sent to the ICCPHSE on 4/13/03; no objections were received.

**8. How does this program relate to the college's/university's strategic plan?**

The M.A. in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication at Iowa State relates to the university mission in several ways. Iowa State's mission embraces synergy between science/technology and the liberal arts and social sciences. As a field of study, rhetoric, composition, and professional communication addresses the natural relationship between science/technology and communication.

With its emphasis on communication, an M.A. in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication also helps prepare students "to be productive and responsible citizens of the world," and to contribute to the effectiveness of the "interchange and understanding" among Iowans and other members of the world community" (see University Mission Statement).

Furthermore, an M.A. in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication meets university goals by enhancing the students' skills in communication, analysis, and attention to ethical action. This degree meets the university goal of providing curricula that prepare students "for successful and rewarding lives in a rapidly changing world—with emphasis on developing critical thinking and team learning abilities" (University Mission Statement).

### Additional Resource Needs

Either question one or question two requires a “yes” answer. In addition to a “yes” response to one of the first two questions, question three and question four should be answered. If applicable, question five should be answered.

1. **Will the program require new resources?** Yes \_\_\_ No x  
If “yes,” what is the plan to obtain new resources?
2. **Will the program require reallocated resources?** Yes x No \_\_\_  
If “yes,” what is the university’s reallocation plan to fund this program?

The program will take advantage of the new hire that has been approved in multimedia design and document publication. Approximately 20% of this new, approved faculty line will be devoted to MA level instruction. The department is interviewing applicants Spring 2003 and will hire a person to begin Fall 2003. Because this cost has already been approved and budgeted as part of whole-department needs, there are, in a sense, no new resources necessary.

Costs for computer equipment and software will be absorbed as part of regularly budgeted upgrades in technology in the department. The program will be funded in part by university computer fees and, in part, by departmental funds. Other computer hardware and software needs should be adequately met by the normal cycle of computer lab upgrades.

Otherwise, the costs of the program would remain the same if the department were able to offer an M.A. in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication in place of an M.A. in English with an emphasis in Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication.

3. **At what level of enrollment will additional resources be required for the program?**

If the enrollment were to double, e.g., reach 50, then additional resources beyond those indicated here would be needed.



4. Estimate the total costs (or *incremental increases in expenditures*) that may be necessary as a result of the new program for the next three years.

	First year	Second year	Third year
A. Faculty*	\$8,000*	\$8,500*	\$9,000*
B. Graduate Assistants	0	0	0
C. General Expense	0	0	0
D. Equipment	0	0	0
E. Library Resources	0	0	0
F. New Space Needs (estimated amount & cost of new space and/or remodeled space)	0	0	0
G. Computer Use	\$4,600	\$6,000	0
H. Other resources	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	\$4,600	\$6,000	0

\* As noted above, 20% of the recently approved position in multimedia design and document publication will entail instructional duties in the masters level program in rhetoric, composition, and professional communication. Any costs of upgrading the program from an emphasis to a degree have, thus, already been approved.