



June 2011

## **Bachelor of Arts in History University of Washington Tacoma**

### **Introduction**

The University of Washington Tacoma (UWT) proposes to offer a Bachelor of Arts in History degree beginning Fall 2011. UWT projects enrollment of 12 FTE students the first year, increasing to 62 FTE students by the fifth year. By Year Five, 30 students per year would graduate, prepared for graduate-level study or jobs involving research, critical thinking, and communication skills. The proposed program would be based in UWT's Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (IAS) unit, which has grown to more than 70 faculty, since its inception in 1990.

### **Relationship to Institutional Role and Mission and the Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Washington**

The proposed program would help UWT realize its vision of becoming a more comprehensive institution. According to its mission statement, UWT "embraces an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge that instills problem-solving and critical thinking skills for meaningful lives."<sup>1</sup> The proposed program would support this effort by training students to think critically in an interdisciplinary field. In addition, the proposed program would impart research and communication skills. Since employers in many fields value these skills highly, the proposed program would support the *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education* goal of creating a higher education system that drives greater economic prosperity, innovation, and opportunity.

### **Program Need**

History has been popular at UW's Seattle campus, with 237 declared majors in 2007-08, increasing to 356 in Fall 2010. At the Tacoma campus, the IAS unit has offered upper division history courses for several years, and enrollment statistics are consistent with significant history demand from UWT students. Twenty-eight out of 38 upper division history courses offered at UWT between 2006 and 2009 were full, with an average of six students turned away from each full course. Currently, UWT students interested in history must choose a related degree, such as the B.A. in American Studies or a history-intensive concentration within the B.A. in Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. Some IAS students prefer a degree with a more traditional, recognizable title and have asked about delaying their graduation until the history major is available. A widely recognizable title would benefit both students and employers by more clearly communicating students' academic focus.

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<sup>1</sup> UWT's mission statement is available at: <http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/chancellor/mission.html>.

To gauge interest from potential students at local community colleges, UWT's Institutional Planning and Research Office surveyed students at Pierce College, South Puget Sound Community College, and Tacoma Community College in 2007. Out of 372 respondents interested in attending UWT, 52 (14 percent) chose history as an area of interest. A follow-up survey indicated that, out of 148 respondents who entered UWT, 12 students (8 percent) were specifically interested in a baccalaureate history degree. In addition, a campus-wide 2011 student survey indicated 21 students (7.5 percent) would major in history and 71 students (25 percent) were interested or very interested in history.

According to an external reviewer, students major in history not only because they enjoy the subject but also because they perceive the degree's usefulness in many careers. In his review letter, Dr. S. Charles Bolton stated "The broad perspective on the world and the emphasis on critical thinking and analytical writing that is part of the discipline is a good background for legal studies, work in public agencies, and a variety of private sector jobs." Placement statistics for UW Seattle BA History graduates corroborate this assertion, with 98-100 percent of 2005-06 and 2006-07 graduates either employed or engaged in further study one year after graduation.

The state's employer needs assessment joint report, *A Skilled and Educated Workforce*, identifies a demand-supply gap for editors/writers/performers. Writing proficiency is at the top of the proposed program's list of student learning outcomes. Similarly, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's 2010 employer survey indicates 39 percent of employers have difficulty recruiting employees with adequate writing skills and 69 percent have difficulty recruiting employees with problem solving or critical thinking skills.<sup>2</sup> Critical thinking, though not an explicit learning outcome, underlies other learning outcomes of the proposed program.

The proposed program would benefit the community by providing access to scholarly presentations of senior theses and public lectures by faculty and visiting scholars. Moreover, local cultural and historical organizations, such as the Washington State History Museum would benefit from student interns. Furthermore, the proposed program would help UWT attract history-oriented grants from agencies such as the National Commission for Historic Preservation and the American Historical Association. Results of student and faculty research about local history would be made available to the public through the UWT library's local history collection.

The proposed program would complement rather than duplicate existing programs. Although Pacific Lutheran University, Saint Martin's University, and University of Puget Sound offer BA History programs in the South Sound Region, the proposed program would differ because of its curricular focus and interdisciplinary approach. For example, its course menu contains more cultural history than many traditional programs. Also, its faculty, who have had significant experience teaching UWT's interdisciplinary arts and sciences courses, would weave expertise in literature, art, music, economics, government, and philosophy into history courses.

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<sup>2</sup> Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board *Employer Survey Results 2010*. Pages 12 and 13.

## **Diversity**

To enhance student diversity, the IAS unit would advertise through appropriate media and seek applicants through contacts with student groups, local community groups (such as Safe Streets), and Native American groups (such as the Muckleshoot Nation). In addition, it would recruit in local high schools and community colleges with large numbers of underrepresented minorities. It also would work with advisers on campus to assist students from underrepresented groups who might be interested in the program to seek internships.

## **Program Description**

The proposed 65 quarter-credit program aims to teach students how to distill large amounts of historical information, form hypotheses supported by evidence, and express their findings concisely. Students would learn how to gather and analyze information, draw conclusions based on analysis, and present their work orally and in writing. Students could enroll either full- or part-time.

History would be an open major within IAS, meaning history students would meet the same admission requirements as other IAS students. Students who satisfy Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) criteria would be admissible without additional prerequisite coursework; however, UWT intends to create history-specific articulation agreements with community college partners.

After admission, students would complete 30 quarter-credits of core courses, including 20 credits of foundational lower-division world and American history survey courses and 10 credits of upper-division research methods and senior thesis courses. To obtain depth in a selected field, students would also complete 35 (including 25 upper division) elective credits in United States history, European history, Asian history, or self-designed tracks. The self-designed track would allow students to pursue a topical approach to history (e.g. economic, environmental, military, gender, etc.). In addition to a senior thesis, students would complete a portfolio. Students would have the option of completing 10 internship credits.

Courses would be taught by a mix of tenured/tenure-track faculty and lecturers (most of whom would hold a Ph.D.), with tenured/tenure-track faculty providing most of the effort. UWT has already established a stable lecturer pool but would work to enhance stability through multi-year contracts.

Student learning and program assessment would both use multiple measures. Student learning would be assessed through instructor evaluation of required papers, exams, class participation, presentations, a portfolio, and a senior thesis. Program assessment would employ student course evaluations, student portfolio review, entry and exit surveys, instructor peer evaluations, student end of program evaluation, and job advancement measures via alumni surveys.

### **Program Costs**

The proposed program would enroll 12 FTE students the first year, increasing to 62 FTE students the fifth year. At that time, it would require 3.31 FTE instructional faculty (including 50 percent effort from a lecturer to be hired) and 0.6 FTE administrative faculty and staff (including 10 percent joint effort from IAS's Director and Associate Director). It would not require any new infrastructure and would be funded through tuition and internal reallocation. The direct cost of instruction would be \$351,696, or \$5,673 per average annual FTE student. This lies within the upper division social sciences cost range reported in the HECB's *2005-06 Education Cost Study* (July 2007).

### **External Review**

Two external reviewers not affiliated with the University of Washington evaluated the proposal: Dr. S. Charles Bolton, Emeritus Professor and former Chair, Department of History, University of Arkansas Little Rock; and Dr. David Doellinger, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of History, Western Oregon University. In addition, the proposal included a letter of support from Dr. William Rorabaugh, Professor, Department of History, University of Washington Seattle.

The reviewers supported approval of the proposed program, noting multiple strengths. For example, Dr. Doellinger identified curriculum, assessment, and permanent faculty as key strengths. No reviewer voiced any significant concerns, and all deemed it appropriate for UWT to offer a history degree at this point in the institution's evolution. According to Dr. Doellinger, "It is truly difficult to envision a university without a history major." Dr. Bolton closed by saying "This proposal offers the opportunity to expand and strengthen the university curriculum at little cost by adding a high-quality degree program that will fill what many may otherwise see as a gap in its offerings."

### **Staff Analysis**

The proposed program would expand access to higher education in the South Puget Sound Region in a way that supports the *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education* and UWT's mission. Moreover, it would help UWT realize its vision of becoming a more comprehensive institution. The idea that offering a history degree is an appropriate step for UWT at this point in the institution's evolution is reinforced by external reviewer comments.

The proposed program would respond to employer, student, and community demand at a reasonable cost without duplicating other programs. Students would benefit from communication and critical thinking skills the program would instill. Employers would benefit from hiring graduates with these skills. Students and employers would both benefit from a widely recognizable degree title that clearly communicates students' academic focus. The community would benefit from internships, public lectures, and access to research results.

Students would study a curriculum deemed appropriate by external reviewers. Most of the instruction would be provided by tenured/tenure-track faculty, whose quality reviewers noted. Proposed assessment plans drew reviewer praise.

**Staff Recommendation**

After careful review of the proposal and supporting materials, staff recommends approval of the Bachelor of Arts in History at the University of Washington Tacoma. The HECB's Education Committee discussed the proposal during its June 8, 2011 meeting and recommended approval by the full Board.



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

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**RESOLUTION NO. 11-19**

**WHEREAS**, University of Washington Tacoma proposes to offer a Bachelor of Arts in History;  
and

**WHEREAS**, The program would support the *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education*, as well  
as the university's mission; and

**WHEREAS**, The program would respond to student, employer, and community demand without  
duplicating existing programs; and

**WHEREAS**, The program has support from external reviewers; and

**WHEREAS**, The program would be offered at a reasonable cost; and

**WHEREAS**, The program represents an appropriate step in the University of Washington  
Tacoma's evolution as a university;


**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the  
Bachelor of Arts in History at the University of Washington Tacoma effective June 30, 2011.

Adopted:

June 30, 2011

Attest:

  
Ethelda Burke, Chair

  
Earl Hale, Vice Chair