Additional budget info about the MA in Health Communication proposal

04/03/18

The following concerns were raised in the Budget Committee as noted in the left column below. Responses to the concerns are noted in the right column below.

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<tr>
<th>Budget Committee Concern</th>
<th>Author Response</th>
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<td>1. The proposal needs to clearly provide funding resources for a possible assistant professor position from year 3 (see the financial sheet attached to the proposal). My understanding is that this position would be needed only if increased enrollments exceed projections; and in any case, the proposal needs to spell out how much financial support they can get and from where.</td>
<td>An assistant professor position is noted for year three that would be justified and funded primarily by revenue from online MA Health Communication and Promotion enrollments. In addition, revenue from sustainable enrollment in the online MA Strategic Communication program and both online graduate certificates in Strategic Communication and Health Communication and Promotion can also be factored in to cover the new faculty member’s salary and benefits.</td>
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<td>2. The projected number of students: 15 in the first year, 25 in the second year and so on. I am assuming that this is from an EMSI estimate, is this correct? It seems a bit surprising for a Master’s level program to grow at the same rate as an undergrad level program like English (see English proposal). I tend to think the pool is a bit smaller for grad than undergrad. If so, what will they do in the</td>
<td>Our estimated enrollment numbers are based on baseline numbers and growth of our existing online MA in Strategic Communication. In 2012 we launched with 16 students enrolled and grew to more than 100 students within the first year. We anticipate this program will grow at a similar rate. Our initial needs assessment indicates this program will be of interest to a number of target audiences and will likely be quite popular for those not only in the health communication industry, but those in clinical and medical fields interested in learning professional communication skills. According to market research partner Emsi, currently, there are only 14 institutions in the US who have recorded completions in Health Communication in the last 14 years. Couple this low number of opportunities for education with a job growth of 14.3% (2007-2017), and a projected 13% job growth in health</td>
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| educators and community health workers (BLS.gov) from 2014-2024 and the data indicates there is a high need for this area of study. Additionally, market research partner EAB recently noted Public Health, Health Informatics, and Health Care Administration among the 30 degrees with the most potential for success as online degrees through the WSU Global Campus. This degree imparts skills that are relevant to all three programs.  

In a review of competitors, it was discovered that no accredited university in the Pacific Northwest or Inland Northwest offers an online Master of Arts in Health Communication and Promotion. Therefore, at this time, it will be the only online MA in Health Communication and Promotion in our region. Further, we have worked with programs in WSU Colleges of Nursing, Medicine, Pharmacy and Veterinary Medicine and have identified that this program would be of interest as a second degree or certificate to many of their students – especially because of its flexible, online delivery format.  

Current enrollment projections are conservative. As with our online MA Strategic Communication and online BA Integrated Strategic Communication programs, we will engage in consistent and targeted outreach and promotion of the program through standard paid, earned, shared, and owned channels including activities such as interactive info sessions, online advertising, public relations, email marketing, and coordinated word-of-mouth efforts. Furthermore, five of the 10 courses in the program are also taught as part of the online MA Strategic Communication program. All five of these courses are already offered every semester – often at full capacity of 20-25 students enrolled in each course in fall, spring, and summer semesters.  

In order to meet enrollment projections, our primary focus will be on two priorities:

1) Manage enrollments in the four existing COM professional core courses and COMSTRAT 701 capstone course – ensuring that both online MA Strategic Communication and online MA Health Communication and Promotion students are
accommodated and per-course enrollments do not exceed 25 students (and if so – plan and prepare for accommodating inflated enrollments through the appointment of TA’s or added course sections)

2) Meet enrollment projections for the five COMHLTH courses so there is 1) justification to offer the course and 2) faculty allocation and time is maximized

In order to meet these objectives, we are applying a paced approach to introducing all new COMHLTH courses. The five existing COM/COMSTRAT courses will continue to be offered every semester. New courses will be released over a three-year period – allowing time for the program to grow and for COMHLTH courses to reach projected capacities. Here is a reiteration of the three-year timetable:

Class of Spring 2020 Online MA Health Communication and Promotion Standard Program Plan

The program plan is based on the most common model of students taking two courses/semester

- Semester 1 (Fall 2018) – COM 561 & COM 562 (existing courses)
- Semester 2 (Spring 2019) – COM 563 & COMHLTH 570 (one new class)
- Semester 3 (Summer 2019) – COM 564 & COMHLTH 571 (one new class)
- Semester 4 (Fall 2019) – COMHLTH 572 & COMHLTH 573 (two new classes)
- Semester 5 (Spring 2020) – COMHLTH 574 & COMSTRAT 701 (one new class)

Year 1 (Fall 2018 – Summer 2019):

- New Course Design: COMHLTH 570: Health Communication and Behavior Change (offered spring 2019) and COMHLTH 571 Communicating Health in Practice (offered summer 2019)
- Hiring Plan: No new hires anticipated
Partnerships: Solidify partnerships (course offerings as core or electives) with WSU College of Nursing, WSU College of Pharmacy, Professional Science Master’s degree in Molecular Biosciences, and Nursing Health Disparities Research

Establish new partnerships and collaborations with other WSU health-related units including College of Medicine, as well as health organizations within the state such as Washington State Department of Health.

Facility Modifications: none

Recruiting: (see plan)

Year 2 (Fall 2019 – Summer 2020):

- New Course Design: COMHLTH 572: Communicating Health to Specialized Populations and COMHLTH 573 Communicating Health in a Digital Landscape (offered fall 2019) and COMHLTH 574 Health Message Design and Effectiveness (offered spring 2020)

- Hiring Plan: No new hires anticipated. Adjuncts may be brought in if needed and financially justified.

- Partnerships: Support and evolve existing partnerships with WSU health-related divisions and outside organizations in support of health communication

- Facility Modifications: none

- Recruiting: (see plan)

Year 3 (Fall 2020-Summer 2021):

- Hiring Plan: Assistant Professor with specialization in health communication

- Partnerships: Support and evolve existing partnerships with WSU health-related divisions and outside organizations in support of health communication

- Facility Modifications: none
Recruiting: (see plan)

With the online MA Strategic Communication program, there have been circumstances when enrollment projections for a given course were not met. This is of particular risk in the summer – especially when students have maxed out their financial aid allocation and as a result, deviate from their program plans by not enrolling in pre-designated courses. Through language in the student handbook, as well as coordinated communication efforts with students throughout the academic year, we take steps to prevent them from deviating from program plans including putting accounts on hold, placing them on wait lists, and no longer ensuring their original graduation dates. Such measures incentivize them to stay on track and limit the chance of courses not meeting enrollment projections. Similar processes will be put in place for the online MA Health Communication and Promotion program. At worse case, a course may be dropped from the semester line up if enrollment projections are not met and it is not fiscally responsible to assign a faculty member to teach the course. Program plans would have to be modified and students would receive notification about short-term and long-term impacts.