New Academic Program:
B.A./B.S. in Applied Humanities

Program Proposed Start Date

Summer 2022

Program Description

This proposal is to create a new Bachelor of Art / Bachelor of Science (B.A./B.S.) degree in Applied Humanities (AH). Summed up in the idea of "applied humanities," this degree focuses on training students via liberal arts methods to greatly enhance their skills in communication and cultural competency, especially in terms of career preparedness. By taking several classes that contextualize the current diverse United States' workplace, graduates will understand the full range of ways in which all forms of communications – including in the workplace and the public sphere – embed cultural perspectives, rhetorical positions, and historical context. Through critical thinking and writing, students prepare for a future as engaged citizens and successful professionals who can construct reasoned arguments, evaluate diverse perspectives, and resist reductive explanations.

The learning outcomes for each required course in AH include one or more of the most desired professional competencies as determined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Students in this program will develop skills in the following areas:

- Applying critical thinking/problem solving to the workplace
- Generating highly skilled oral/written professional communications
- Effectively using of digital technology as a communication tool
- Integrating cultural fluency into professional settings

Through critical thinking and writing, students majoring in AH prepare for a future as engaged citizens and successful professionals who can construct reasoned arguments, evaluate diverse perspectives, and question simple explanations.

The writing courses within the major are all related to professional communication competencies in specific areas that are highly relevant to the contemporary workplace. The philosophy, history, and religious studies courses with the major focus on helping students gain understanding of who they must interact with as professionals and engaged community members. By incorporating courses on a diverse range of topics relating to the history of the United States and national experiences today, this degree guides students to expand their worldview, helping create the educated citizenry that is so necessary for a functioning democracy.

Program Purpose/Relationship to University Mission/Strategic Plan

First, this broad-appeal liberal arts major is grounded in producing skilled graduates who are critical thinkers (Mission, SP 4.0, page 2). The learning outcomes of this major will focus on four themes: workplace skills; diversity; high context thinking; and civil engagement and public discourse. In particular, this degree highlights learning outcomes that have direct application to

the workplace and career success. Additionally, the curricular organization is designed to provide students with content that will enhance their workplace skills and their ability to make more informed decisions as they navigate work and society.

Secondly, because this degree will be offered through Ecampus via online delivery, it aims to be "accessible to all learners" (SP4.0 Goal II). In 2019-20, Ecampus had over 10,600 online learners, located in all 50 states and 50 countries. Ecampus undergraduate students add to the diversity of Oregon State's student population, and therefore help support Goal II's distinction to provide "equity in access and achievement among learners from diverse backgrounds." In AY2021 undergraduate demographics revealed that Ecampus students are older-than average (31), 45% are first generation and 49% have high financial need compared to campus students of whom 30% have high financial need.

Lastly, this degree is a good example of how Oregon State can "retool the OSU experience for the 21st century learner," the fourth of twenty actions listed in SP4.0. The Applied Humanities degree will include embedded completion grants and lower student costs for textbooks with Open Educational Resources (OERs), when possible. These cost-saving tactics will be included in marketing and recruitment efforts, and therefore meeting one of the specific tactics linked to this action that will "increase transparency around costs and career opportunities."

Program Context

This new major differs from existing Ecampus bachelor's degrees in two key ways: 1) it offers a broad-appeal major in the humanities, designed specifically for adult learners with previous credit earned; 2) it concentrates on a narrow path of courses intended to hone and enhance career skills and to increase the marketability and workplace communication skills of its graduates.

This concept and its features have been developed and revised over the past three plus years with a core committee of College of Liberal Arts unit heads, deans, and Ecampus leadership. Courses in the major will draw from existing online courses from the School of History, Philosophy and Religion, and the School of Writing, Literature and Film. The narrow path of available courses will promote student engagement with a cohort of peers across multiple courses and maximize capacity for these existing courses.

We anticipate that AH students will arrive at OSU with a diverse range of courses already taken at a variety of institutions. Ecampus provides transcript evaluation to maximize the transfer credit assigned for their lower-division requirements. Despite the transfer-friendly nature of this degree, virtually all students will end up taking the following required core AH courses – it is extremely unlikely they will have suitable upper-division transfer credits:

HST 369 IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S. SINCE 1880
REL 364 UNITED STATES RELIGION AND SOCIAL REFORM
PHL 325 SCIENTIFIC REASONING
PHL 344 PACIFISM, JUST WAR, AND TERRORISM
PHL 448 NATIVE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHIES
REL 372 AFRICAN AMERICAN RELIGIONS
WR 301 PUBLISHING AND EDITING

January 27-28, 2022 Board of Trustees Meetings

WR 303 WRITING FOR THE WEB
WR 362 SCIENCE WRITING
WR 414 ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING
WR 420 STUDIES IN WRITING

There are two Ecampus programs that might attract some similar degree-seekers, Liberal Studies and the online history degree. More importantly, this degree, with its learning outcomes' emphasis on communication, cultural contexts, and career skills, differs greatly from a standard history degree and will likely attract a different kind of student – adult true distance learners whose focus is degree completion. The proposed degree includes required courses from Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Writing. In the Liberal Studies program, students choose three areas of concentration, shaping their own degree., and by contrast, the narrow path to completion in the AH degree has the opposite approach - faculty have created a plan of study in a very precise way.

Need for the Program

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 35,442,000 individuals in the United States aged 25 and older reported having "some college, [but] no degree" in 2018. A recent statewide needs assessment conducted by Ecampus and market research partner Eduventures reported that in Oregon, an estimated pool of more than 115,000 prospective adult students aged 25-59 have some college but no degree and are open to continuing their education entirely or partially online over the next three years. Often, life circumstances interrupt the path to a degree and students "stop out" from college.

The following enrollment is anticipated: year 1 – 55 students enrolled; year 2 – 133 enrolled with 12 graduating; year 3 – 165 enrolled with 23 graduating; year 4 – 200 enrolled, 42 enrolled; year 5 – 211 enrolled, 48 graduates.

Although we expect many adult learners in Applied Humanities will already have some professional experience in either long term or developing careers, popular careers for humanities graduates include the following:

- Personal Finance Advisor
- Exhibit Designer
- Customer Success Manager
- Business Analyst
- Growth Hacker
- Product Marketing
- Internal Communications
- Content Strategist
- Web Developer
- Journalist

- Social media Manager
- Political Campaign Manager
- Content Marketing/Manager
- Web Producer
- Technical Writer
- Editor
- Search Engine Marketing
- Public Relations
- Corporate Blogger

Program Financials

Because this depends on currently existing classes and faculty already employed by the School of History, Philosophy, and Religion as well as Writing, Literature, and Film, the costs are minimal. Ecampus will provide funds for a program coordinator and an advisor.

RECOMMENDATION

All appropriate university committees and the OSU Faculty Senate have positively reviewed the proposed program. The Provost recommends that the Academic Strategies Committee approve the establishment of a B.A./B.S. in Applied Humanities, effective summer 2022, pending support of the Statewide Provosts Council and the approval of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.