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REVISED

To: Phyllis Wise, Provost
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From: Suzanne Ortega, Vice Provost and Dean
Melissa Austin, Associate Dean for Academic Programs
The Graduate School

RE: Comparative History of Ideas Program Review

At its meeting of January 5, 2006, the Graduate School Council met with members of the team that reviewed the Comparative History of Ideas Program (CHID), Ellen Kaisse, (Divisional Dean for Arts and Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences), John Toews (Professor and Chair, CHID), and UW Review Committee members Matthew Sparke (Associate Professor, Geography), Caroline Simpson (Associate Professor, English) and Anthony Geist (Professor and Chair, Spanish and Portuguese Studies).

The review was the first comprehensive assessment of the Comparative History of Ideas Program. The review site visit was conducted on May 2-3, 2005, at which time the review committee met with CHID faculty, students, staff, and related faculty. CHID offers an undergraduate major program and a minor.

The review committee reported that CHID is an impressive undergraduate program. It serves approximately 225 outstanding undergraduate majors and additionally benefits over 400 students in other academic units, e.g., international studies majors. It is a national model for interdisciplinary humanities programs of "how to articulate and implement a vision of undergraduate education that empowers students as architects of their own education." The program, however, faces a number of major challenges, including the difficulties in securing long-term staffing and other resource commitments from the college, inadequate resources to meet the instructional and advising needs of the large number of CHID students, the loss of two key faculty, and the departure of the previous College of Arts and Sciences Divisional Dean for Arts and Humanities and the Dean of Undergraduate Education, both of whom provided administrative leadership for the program. CHID is the largest humanities program within the College of Arts and Sciences without a basic infrastructure to support it. Particularly in the context of severely

constrained staff and space resources, the loss of faculty and senior administrative leadership makes this unique program quite vulnerable, as described below.

1) The lack of space for the program in Padelford Hall is a major issue. Better space is needed to advise the large number of students the program serves, and to accommodate visiting faculty. In addition, a closet-size office is currently shared by 14 teaching assistants, and the student lounge serves various functions, such as a computer lab and classroom; it is not dedicated solely to the CHID program.

2) As is true for interdisciplinary programs across campus, CHID planning efforts are hampered by a lack of tenure lines within the unit and the corresponding difficulties in securing sufficient and predictable faculty FTE commitments to insure high quality advising and instruction. The review committee urged that UW administration develop budgeting and staffing plans that will meet this short and longer-term need. One possibility would be for CHID to become a line-bearing academic unit with “adequate administrative support and safeguards” that retain the uniquely interdisciplinary and individualized nature of the program. The development of strategies for cross-listing courses and otherwise securing the commitment of faculty FTE should also be explored; the committee noted that administration support for the recent hire of an assistant professor in CHID was very promising.

In considering the review committee report, Graduate School Council noted that the program is innovative, and is providing an extraordinary educational experience for some of UW’s finest undergraduate students. The Council noted that recent transitions and continued stresses on space and support staff makes the future of CHID problematic.

The Council considered several possibilities to more effectively leverage departmental resources to meet CHID’s staffing needs. One idea considered was development of a rotating lectureship for assistant or associate professors from other units on an annual basis; such a position would enhance the flow of new pedagogical and content between and across CHID and its participating departments and colleges. The opportunity to work with CHID students and a reduction in departmental teaching load could be incentives to faculty participation in the rotating lectureship. Another alternative the Council considered is for joint appointments with CHID and other academic units. Both alternatives could provide CHID with the needed instructional support. The Council also was highly complimentary of CHID’s efforts to secure Title VI funding to bring a South East Asian musician to the University. The Council suggested that an expansion of collaborations between CHID and the various Title VI grants also might be another mutually rewarding and cost effective strategy for securing needed resources.

The Council notes that the growth in program majors and the interdisciplinary nature of CHID requires extensive “hands-on advising and individual monitoring of students.” CHID relies currently on a Graduate Staff Assistant, funded at 50%, to serve as an academic adviser. Funding for this position is currently being “borrowed” from designated instructional funds and thus cannot be sustained for the long-term. The adviser’s responsibilities extend beyond general advising to include working with student focus groups, particularly the New Majors Focus Group “which provides an introduction to the CHID learning community.” The Council thus believed that the need for sufficient support to insure full-time academic advising must be addressed immediately.

The Graduate School Council recommended unanimously that the Comparative History of Ideas Program be reaffirmed with the next review to be scheduled in 5 years, specifically in the 2010-2011 academic year. At that time, the Council asked that CHID submit a progress report in the form of a strategic business plan. The Council indicated the shorter review timeline is based on recognition of CHID's record of excellence in interdisciplinary, undergraduate education but also of its serious challenges in continuing to be a viable program considering its precarious resource base, and its need to develop a long-range plan for securing new resources and better leveraging existing ones.

- c: Mark Emmert, President
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Graduate School Council