

The Senate of Michigan Technological University

PROPOSAL 1-86

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN RHETORIC AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

BACKGROUND:

On December 12, 1984, the Senate passed Proposal 3-85, Commitment to Develop a Master of Science in Rhetoric and Technical Communication. The Graduate Council endorsed the proposal for a Master of Science in Rhetoric and Technical Communication on October 25, 1984. Under Senate Proposal 10-70, the Senate must give its recommendation for the establishment of the proposed program. On October 14, 1984, the Curricular Policy Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Senate approve the proposal to establish a program leading to a Master of Science in Rhetoric and Technical Communication.

PROPOSAL:

The Senate of Michigan Technological University recommends the establishment of a program leading to the Master of Science in Rhetoric and Technical Communication. A description of the program follows.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Introduction

The Master of Science in Rhetoric and Technical Communication is a degree program that combines the centuries-old scholarly study of speech, writing, and reading with the modern practices of communication in scientific and technical fields. The areas that comprise this field of study include the following:

- Composition
- Communication
- Rhetoric
- Graphic and visual design
- Language and linguistics
- Text analysis

These areas are united by their focus on human communication. Students explore factors that promote or inhibit good communication; they improve their own writing, speaking, and editing skills, and they broaden their understanding of the major theories of communication that inform its study and lead to new and improved applications. A student's program of courses is designed on an individual basis, building on fundamentals and proceeding to more advanced work. The program culminates with the student's demonstration -- via coursework, thesis, or project -- the mastery of theory and the application of principles of communication.

Admission

The Master of Science in Rhetoric and Technical Communication is administered by the Graduate School and applications for admission should be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Rhetoric and Technical Communication Committee is chaired by Dr. Billie Wahlstrom (906/487-2381). Specific questions relating to the Master of Science in Rhetoric and Technical Communication or to the availability of financial assistance should be addressed to Dr. Wahlstrom.

Applicants for master's study in rhetoric and technical communication are judged by their previous achievement in academic coursework and their communication skills. Applicants can hold a degree in any recognized academic field but must provide evidence of superior communication skills by submitting a substantive writing sample along with their applications. Applications are reviewed by the Department of Humanities' Graduate Committee. This group makes recommendations for acceptance or rejection to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Program of Study and Research

The Master of Science in Rhetoric and Technical Communication is awarded in recognition of demonstrated mastery of subject matter in the areas of study that constitute the fields of rhetoric and technical communication. In summary, the student must:

- a. Demonstrate mastery of the fundamental subject matter in rhetoric and technical communication by successfully passing the four required core courses: "Modern Rhetorical Theory," "Communication Theory," "Writing and Editing," and "Visual Communication."
- b. Prepare a specific proposal and coherent plan for master's study of some aspect of rhetorical and technical communication.
- c. Demonstrate -- via coursework, project, or thesis -- a significant mastery of advanced principles of rhetoric and technical communication.
- d. Defend the validity and significance of coursework, project, or thesis by successfully passing a comprehensive oral examination.

Students hoping to engage in research or to continue for a Ph.D. in communication at another institution also are required to take "Approaches to Communication Research." Students who are interested in teaching technical communication or who hold teaching assistantships in Humanities also must take "Composition Theory." The remaining coursework will be developed by the student and his or her advisor on an individual basis. The purpose of the coursework is to aid the student in satisfying the degree requirements outlined above and to prepare the student for leadership roles in teaching, research, government, and business.

Example Program

The following program of coursework and research is given as an example to illustrate an idealized chronological progression of a full-time student with a B.S. or B.A. in technical communication or a similar program. A full load is defined as 12 credits per academic quarter. The times shown are for illustration only and do not represent minimums or maximums. Each applicant is unique and will be so treated by his or her advisor.

Chronological Summary (Thesis option)

- a. Three Quarters or about 36 credits of M.S. coursework

- b. Selection of the research topic and appointment of the Advisory Committee
- c. One quarter or about 9 credits of thesis preparation
- d. Oral examination and defense of Master's Thesis
- e. Award of the M.S. degree

Under ideal conditions, the program would require 4 quarters of study beyond the B.S. or B.A. degree.

Adopted by Senate: 30 October 1985

Supported by President: 8 November 1985

BOC Approval: 22 November 1985