MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents

From: Board Office

Subject: Approval of a New B.S. Program in Technical Communication
Iowa State University

Date: December 4, 2000

Recommended Action:

Approve Iowa State University's proposal for a new B.S. program in Technical Communication, effective immediately.

Executive Summary:

Iowa State University requests approval of a new B.S. program in Technical Communication within the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

This proposed program was reviewed by the Interinstitutional Committee on Educational Coordination and the Board Office and is recommended for approval.

Nationwide, rhetoric and professional communication has been recognized as a crucially important course of study. Iowa State University has a graduate program of study in this area but has not had an undergraduate program. A team of external reviewers of the English Department in Fall 1998 noted this as an opportunity for possible program improvement. The current faculty in the English Department graduate program in Rhetoric and Professional Communication will teach undergraduates enrolled in this new program.
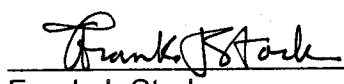
The new major in Technical Communication will address, in part, the dramatic changes in computer technology that have required writing specialists to be adept at hypertext, hypermedia, networking, and animation of software as educational, informational, and even recreational industries move to computer networks. The growth nationally in undergraduate programs in Technical Communication corresponds with significant growth in communication needs in the workplace.

The proposed program will be unique among the colleges and universities in Iowa, is consistent with ISU's mission, will only require limited new financial resources (additional computer equipment), and will be taught by recognized faculty already teaching in the English Department.

This proposal has followed the necessary review and approval process and is recommended by the departmental and college curriculum committees, the Faculty Senate, and the University administration.

Responses to the Board of Regents new program questions are attached.

Robert J. Barak   Approved: _____
                                              Frank J. Stork

h/aa/docket/2000/december/GD3b

REGENTS PROGRAM REVIEW QUESTIONS–Majors

Bachelor of Science Degree, Major in Technical Communication

Department of English, Iowa State University

1. Need

A. How will this proposed program further the educational and curriculum needs of students in the discipline?

Since 1930, the primary goal of undergraduate education in English studies has been to educate students in language and literature. As a result, the main focus of this education has been on learning to read, appreciate, and write about literary texts. When English study had a professional goal, it was in teacher education, instructing majors how to teach secondary students to read, appreciate, and write about literary texts.

However, new developments in the nation and in the workplace have invited, even demanded, an expansion in the goals of undergraduate education in English departments to include instruction in rhetoric and professional (technical) communication. An undergraduate major in technical communication at Iowa State will prepare students, as traditional programs do, to write and analyze professional documents and, as is increasingly required by today's workplace, to be adept at designing information for electronic environments.

Currently, the Department of English at Iowa State offers both M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in professional (technical) communication. Established in 1991, Ph.D. program in Rhetoric and Professional Communication has already achieved national recognition. At its mandated five-year program review, this Ph.D. was ranked among the top programs in the nation offering this degree (Report to the Board of Regents, April 1996). The program was cited as a "national leader, an experimental program breaking new ground." The department wishes to provide students with a complete range of offerings in professional communication by offering undergraduates the opportunity to major in this area of study.

B. How does it further the educational and curriculum needs of other units in the college and university?

The proposed program could make Iowa State the recognized place to study professional (technical) communication in the nation, with currently the largest faculty in the discipline nationwide and with both graduate and undergraduate programs in the field. The proposed major in technical communication would also provide students majoring in scientific and technical disciplines at Iowa State with an extremely attractive minor, since employers commonly inquire about applicants' communication skills.

2. State programs

A. What programs in this field of study are available in other colleges and universities in Iowa?

No other colleges or universities in the state have an undergraduate major in professional (technical) communication. The University of Northern Iowa offers minors in both technical and business communication. The University of Iowa has its Writer's Workshop, which features creative writing, but does not offer programs in professional (technical) communication. The undergraduate major in technical communication at Iowa State would be the first in the state.

B. With what representatives of these programs have you consulted in developing this proposal? Provide a summary of the reactions of each institution consulted.

In the absence of programs within the state, the department consulted with Dr. Mary Lay, University of Minnesota, who was on the departmental review team that recommended we establish an undergraduate major in technical communication at Iowa State. As her supporting letter indicates, Dr. Lay believes our proposal would "better prepare future technical communicators for the challenges of their careers..." (see Appendix D).

C. In what ways is this proposed program similar to those mentioned in A. In what ways is it different?

In the absence of programs within the state, the department examined undergraduate programs in professional (technical) communication at universities outside the state, and especially at Peer 11 institutions, when designing this proposed program. Comparisons to these programs are included in the program proposal, under Section 7b "Similar programs at other universities."

D. How does the proposed program supplement the current programs available?

The proposed undergraduate major at Iowa State provides an undergraduate program that will complement the existing graduate programs in the discipline. It will also facilitate undergraduate student access to our nationally recognized faculty in the field of rhetoric and professional communication (see faculty vita, Appendix E).

E. Has the possibility of some kind of inter-institutional program or other such effort been explored? What are the results of this study?

The possibility of inter-institutional programs has not been explored, since the undergraduate major in technical writing at Iowa State will be unique to the state.

F. List the Iowa institutions in which articulation agreements are being developed for the proposed program.

There are no Iowa institutions with comparable or competing programs.

Provide the CIP code for the proposed program.

23.1101

3. Please estimate the enrollment in this program (for the next five years):

A. Undergraduate

	1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr	5th yr.
Majors	5	10	15	20	20
Non-majors		5	10	10	10

B. Graduate:

	1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr	5th yr.
Majors					
Non-majors					

C. On what basis were these estimates made?

The figures for undergraduate majors are based on informal conversations with our current English majors who have declared an RPC (Rhetoric and Professional Communication) emphasis and who might be interested in enrolling in a separate major in technical communication. The initial enrollments for this program, thus, represent an internal shift of students from the current undergraduate emphasis to the new major. Our figures are also based on the success of similar programs at comparable institutions.

D. What are the anticipated sources of these students?

We anticipate three main sources for these students: entering freshmen, students from the existing rhetoric and professional communication emphasis in the English department, and current students from various technical disciplines.

4. Please provide any available data or information on employment opportunities available to graduates of this program in Iowa and nationally.

Nationally, the recent move to establish undergraduate programs in rhetoric and professional communication is reflected in the bachelor programs in technical communication at such respected institutions as Carnegie Mellon, Miami University (Ohio), Michigan Tech, Purdue, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, University of Washington, and University of Minnesota.

These programs address, in part, the dramatic changes in computer technology that have required writing specialists to be adept at hypertext, hypermedia, networking, and animation software as educational, informational, and even recreational industries move to computer networks. In fact, the recent move to establish undergraduate programs in the field corresponds with significant growth in communication needs in the workplace.

The need for these programs is supported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:

> Through the year 2006, the outlook for most writing and editing jobs is expected to continue to be competitive ... and is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2006. ... Demand for technical writers is expected to increase because of the continuing expansion of scientific and technical information, and the continued need to communicate it. <http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos089.htm>

This rapid growth is confirmed by tracking the membership of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), the largest professional organization serving the technical communication profession. For example, in 1994, STC had more than 16,000 members worldwide; now, the organization has more than 23,000 members <http://www.stc-va.org/PDF_Files/98annualrpt.pdf>.

The growth in salaries of technical communicators also reflects the demand. STC reports that median salaries for technical communicators in private industry increased, from approximately $40,000 in 1994 to approximately $47,000 in 1998 <http://www.stc-va.org/PDF_Files/98salary.pdf>. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "The average annual salary for technical writers and editors in the Federal Government in nonsupervisory, supervisory, and managerial positions was about $47,440 in 1996; other writers and editors averaged about $46,590" <http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos089.htm>.

5. **Are there accreditation standards for this program?**

   There are none. Guidelines exist from Council on Programs in Professional, Technical, and Scientific Communication. These are met.

6. **Does the program meet minimal national standards?**

   See item #5 above.

7. **Please report any reactions of the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education.**

   NA

8. Additional Resource Needs

1. Please estimate the probable marginal increases in expenditure that may be necessary as a result of the adoption of this program for the next three years.

	First year	Second year	Third year
A. Faculty	0	0	0
B. Graduate Assistants	0	0	0
C. General Expense	0	0	0
D. Equipment	0	0	0
E. Library Resources	0	0	0
F. New Space Needs (estimated amount & cost of new space and/or remodeled space)	0	0	0
G. Computer Use	$4,600	$6,000	0
H. Other resources	0	0	0
Total	$4,600	$6,000	0

2. Describe the nature and justification for the additional resource needs.

The proposed program will generally use existing computer labs and facilities, so additional new resources will be minimal. New coursework in multimedia will require some specialized software for audio-video editing and production.

3. How is it anticipated that the additional resource needs will be provided? (For programs planning to use external grants, what would be the effect of the grant termination?)

The program will be funded in part by university computer fees and, in part, by departmental funds. Other computer hardware and software needs should be adequately met by the normal cycle of computer lab upgrades.