

Subject: letter in support of joint geography ph.d.

Date: Monday, January 18, 2016 at 12:07:35 PM Mountain Standard Time

From: McCormick, Peter

To: Maria Lane

CC: McCormick, Peter

Dear Maria,

I apologize for the delay in my response. As I mentioned briefly at the SWAAG meetings in San Antonio and in later e-mails, I was, at first glance, very impressed with the New Mexico Joint Doctoral Program in Geography. I am very encouraged by the program because it is both innovative and appropriate. As a geographer trained in the cultural-historical tradition and as a professional working in an interdisciplinary Environmental Studies program, I see the benefits of what UNM and NMSU propose from the disciplinary level. The integrative approach, merging cultural landscape studies, arid land management, and environmental change via the geosciences -- is a very thoughtful and practical approach to both reintegrating the sub-disciplines of geography while at the same time understanding the importance of broad, integrative training at the graduate level. As you know, many disciplines, including geography, history, and the humanities, more and more, are merging traditional humanistic and social science approaches with technology; moreover, there are national concerns about the lack of cohesion between the humanities, social sciences, and the STEM disciplines, including recent conversations at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. I mention this because this national trend -- reintegrating the disciplines -- is important pedagogically and also from a practical perspective. This program is a model for developing both applied and theoretical skills, which is very important for your future students. This diverse approach makes them more marketable and gives them the necessary skills to work in a variety of professions. Lastly, I am also very happy to see that your proposal employs various pedagogical approaches and delivery modes. This makes the program more rich, but also much more practical and accessible to your potential student population. My institution, like yours, serves the Southwest and Four Corners, as well as a large non-traditional and first-generation population. Opening up your program to diverse delivery models and limited residency requirements caters to this population. Perhaps it is the focus your program has on your regional characteristics -- and your programs' strengths -- that makes this proposal so innovative and appropriate. The program is a model for developing both applied and theoretical skills in diverse cultural landscapes and in arid landscapes, and gives them the scientific and technical skills to apply this knowledge. This, coupled with the program's accessibility, is really encouraging and exactly what our region needs. I would not think twice to recommend our graduates to pursue such a program. I applaud you and your colleagues for your effort in putting this together and I hope that it will be received well.

If there is anything else I can do to support your efforts, please let me know.

With every best wish,

Pete McCormick, Ph.D.

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