DATE: November 11, 2014

TO: Dr. Katherine G. Aiken
    Interim Provost and Executive Vice President

FROM: Jodie Nicotra, Associate Chair, Department of English

SUBJECT: Minor Change Notification Request

The University of Idaho is writing to notify the Idaho State Board of Education per Board Policy Section III.G.3.c.ii of the change(s) which we believe is minor.

- **Professional Emphasis (original) to Professional Writing Emphasis (revised)**

The following information is being provided to ensure the minor, non-substantive change(s) is in align with our institutional responsibilities and accreditation.

**Mission and Core Themes:**

With the curricular and name revision of the Professional Emphasis, we seek to provide students with a rhetorical education in writing, reading, and critical inquiry, while helping them build a professional writing portfolio that demonstrates their facility with a wide range of writing genres and technologies.

The broad-reaching implications for students enrolled in this updated English degree emphasis include experiences that prepare them for professional writing opportunities and graduate education, and also opportunities to engage in citizenship, civil service, advocacy, activism, and entrepreneurship.

The revised Professional Writing Emphasis will maintain its curricular synchrony with the Composition Program and the broader University by focusing on

- learning rhetorical knowledge,
- critical thinking, reading, and writing,
- writing processes, and
- knowledge of conventions.

These program learning outcomes clearly support the University Learning Outcomes “learn and integrate,” “think and create,” “communicate,” and “clarify purpose and perspective.” Students also “practice citizenship” by learning to write for a variety of public, lay, and academic audiences. A more rhetorically aware citizen is a more engaged citizen.

Adding “Writing” to the name of the emphasis provides clarification about the focus of this line of study for students and others who might read a student’s transcript.

**Educational Offerings:**
Aside from the name change, the curricular revision to the current Professional Emphasis involves the following two steps:

1. **Revise the curriculum and course offerings to reflect best practices in preparation for professional writing careers**

   Table 1 (end of the document) shows the current requirements for the Professional Emphasis (as listed in the 2014-2015 UI catalog) compared to the proposed revision to this emphasis. Specifically, the revision increases the number of writing courses from 9 to 18, reduces the number of literary history courses from 9 to 6, and includes a new course: “Science Writing.” Changes to the curriculum are underlined. The curricular revision uses existing English courses (except for the new Science Writing course), and proposes to have students complete 9 elective credits from existing courses on the UI catalog. This proposal does not require any additional resources. The proposed revision also acknowledges the importance of both literature (close reading) and linguistics to writing effectively by including required courses in both.

2. **Rationale for Including Elective Choices Outside of English.** Students will choose 9 elective credits to complete the requirements for this emphasis. Students have the option to take all 9 credits from English courses they have not yet taken, or they could combine these with courses with others related to professional writing currently offered by other departments.

   We propose the following courses outside of the English department as options to satisfy the 9 elective credits. This interdisciplinary option provides students with “learning experiences drawn from our disciplinary and interdisciplinary strengths [and] will help students develop the ability to identify and address complex problems and opportunities” (2014-2015 Strategic Plan: Goal 1 of Teaching and Learning Objectives). Following are the descriptions of the courses we include as elective choices and rationale for their inclusion:

   **ART 216: Digital Tools (3 cr).** Introduction to professional design, development, and production workflows related to various aspects of digital design. Demos and lectures cover various industry standard design software.

   Rationale: professional writers are increasingly required to use a wide variety of media. Many technical writing positions ask that applicants be familiar with standard design software. This course supports the goals of all professional writing courses.

   **COMM 335: Intercultural Communication (3 cr).** Survey of current theories and research on intercultural communication; development of critical thinking skills in regard to intercultural interaction and communication styles.

   Rationale: this course builds upon rhetorical concepts and skills emphasized in English 313: Business Writing.

   **HIST 382: History of Biology Conflicts/Controversies (3 cr).** Explores the social and intellectual development of the life sciences as a discipline in Europe and North America, with focus on biology in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Emphasis on evolutionary thought, heredity, development, social uses of biology, and women and gender.

   Rationale: Builds upon rhetorical concepts and skills emphasized in English 318: Science Writing.
JMM 325: Publications Editing (3 cr). Introduction to the development, management, editing, design and distribution of print and Web publications; focuses on periodicals, such as magazines and student-originated projects.

Rationale: Supports the goals of all of our professional writing courses.

JMM 350: Public Relations Writing and Production (3 cr). Public relations writing, publication and design processes for print, broadcast and online media.

Rationale: Builds upon rhetorical concepts and skills emphasized in English 313: Business Writing.

POLS 364 / CSS 344: Politics of the Environment (3 cr). Political factors that influence formation, implementation, and impact of public policies aimed at protecting the environment.

Rationale: Builds upon rhetorical concepts and skills emphasized in English 317: Environmental Writing.

PSYCH 320: Introduction to Social Psychology (3 cr). Theories, concepts, and research on the social bases of behavior and social interaction; topics of personal and social relevance, aggression, prejudice, altruism and helping behavior, interpersonal attraction, behavior in groups, conformity, attitudes, authoritarianism, and obedience to authority.

Rationale: Professional writers are expected to work collaboratively. This course supports the rhetorical concepts and skills emphasized in team writing projects in our professional writing courses.

2. Update the number of credit hours to match those of the other English major emphases

We plan to update the number of credit hours to match those of the other English major emphases. Currently at 39 credits, the Professional Emphasis requires 6 fewer credits than the Literature and Creative Writing Emphases. Since the creation of the Professional Emphasis, additional courses have been added that specifically prepare student for professional writing. Increasing the credit emphasis to 45 credits ensures coherency across the English major.

Planning:

As of fall 2012, the Professional Emphasis is the least populated emphasis within the English major. Internal assessments both at the advising and curricular level have indicated a need to revise the Professional Emphasis curriculum to include courses that better meet the needs of a broad undergraduate student population—including returning professionals, international students, students interested in moving on to graduate school, and students who plan to become professional (non-creative) writers as a career choice.

The changes to the curriculum are described in the section above. All changes will be implemented as of next year.
**Budget:**

There are no anticipated additional revenue or expenditures at this point, since we have faculty adequate enough to cover the courses that will be taught. The revision is mainly a clarifying and polishing of the current curriculum.

**Student Services:**
Since the revision of the emphasis doesn’t require the addition of new courses, there will be no negative impact on student services.

**Physical Facilities:**
No new facilities will be necessary.

**Library and Information Resources:**
The library resources currently devoted to the writing courses will be sufficient for the revised Professional Writing Emphasis.

**Faculty:**
Writing courses are currently staffed by a mix of full-time (board-appointed) faculty and temporary lecturers. There is currently no anticipated change in the staffing of these courses.