Summary from Frank Chaplen:

The College of Liberal Arts, School of History, Philosophy and Religion, proposes to establish a major in Religious Studies at Oregon State University. This is a major field that was part of OSU’s curricular offerings from the 1940s through 1992 when it was a casualty of Measure 5 related budget cuts. The proposed curriculum is strong and will use current best practices in Religious Studies education based on external letters of support. There was genuine excitement on the part of external letters of support for the strength of the proposed curriculum and for the collaborative opportunities discussed as part of the process of reaching out to programs across the state.

Liaison:

Extensive liaison is evident in the strong internal and external letters of support garnered for this proposal. Strong support is evident from the CLA Curriculum Committee and other internal and external stake-holders in the new program.

Curriculum:

Excerpts from external letters of support assessing the overall curriculum: 1) “We were able to review the proposed curriculum for the Religious Studies major at OSU. It is a strong and rigorous curriculum with both breadth and depth¹;” and 2) “The proposed plan of study at OSU is commendable for combining (a) courses that examine theoretical approaches to religion, (b) a range of courses across the span of specific religions, and (c) courses that explore the religious commitments, beliefs and practices. Theoretical, cross cultural, and practical dimensions of the study of religion are all present in your plan. This framework for studying religion shapes the curricula of top-shelf departments and programs today².”

The faculty appears very well-qualified to undertake this endeavor. The number of additional courses is minimal. The REL designator for courses in Religious Studies has been previously approved by the Curriculum Council (Feb 2014). Nine courses are proposed or under development, but the majority of the courses offerings are currently available through the Philosophy or History department. Several PHL and HST courses will be cross-listed as makes sense.

Budget:

The budget appeared reasonable. The Hundere Endowment in Religion and Culture will provide the new funds required by the major for the first five years.

Conclusions:

This is a well-written and thorough proposal worthy of support.

¹ Susanna Morrill, Chair, Religious Studies Department, Lewis & Clark College, Portland, OR
² Richard Miller, Provost Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.