

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING AND SEEKING APPROVAL OF NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Introduction:

Academic initiatives such as new programs that are consonant with Marquette University's mission and strategic plan are encouraged and expected. By policy, new academic programs and substantive changes in current programs require approval of specific committees, the Provost and in some cases, the Board of Trustees before advertising and implementation. These "Guidelines for Developing and Seeking Approval of New Academic Programs" specify the required process. Additional information concerning various academic program changes is available on the Office the Provost website.

Step One: Idea Generation

Ideas for new academic programs come from many sources. They might be the outcome of student or community requests, a college strategic planning process, advances in a discipline or successes at other institutions. Periodic sessions for consideration of potential new programs by faculty, student, alumni or community groups are encouraged.

Step Two: Idea Screening

The number of new degree programs that could be developed at a comprehensive university far exceeds the resources of most institutions. Indeed, even good programming ideas often surpass the resources available or the strategic directions of the college or university. Thus, various ideas for new programs must first be screened at the department and college level (or in the case of proposed interdisciplinary programs with an appropriately representative committee). The general criteria that should be applied in screening new programs are the following:

- Is the proposed program consistent with the mission and strategic plan of the University?
- Can it be delivered with sufficient academic quality?
- Is it likely to be profitable, at minimum on a direct cost basis?
- Is it consistent with the strength and core competencies of the department?
- Is the program free from duplication or competition with a current or planned program within the university?
- Is the program sustainable on a long term basis?
- Does it have characteristics which are distinctive from similar programs offered by the competition?

Many of these questions can be answered on a preliminary basis by standing undergraduate and graduate committees of departments or colleges. It is highly encouraged that deans discuss the proposed program with the provost before moving forward with documentation submission.

Step Three: New Program Proposals

The requirement for a complete new program proposal is determined by each dean in conjunction with the Provost. New program proposals are composed of four discrete but related pieces: a) program description including student learning outcomes; b) market demand analysis; c) business analysis; d) impact on existing programs; e) outcomes evaluation.

A. Program Description

A program description should consist of the following elements:

- program educational goals and student learning outcomes;
- rationale for the program;
- constituency served/intended student market;
- facilities to be used for delivery;
- time line and scheduling for the new program initiation;
- impact on existing curriculum, accreditation;
- locus of program administration and record keeping;
- special needs;
- indication that the involved university offices have been contacted (and note the entities contacted). (See **Appendix A**)

B. Market Demand Analysis

A section on market demand analysis should normally be included in all new program proposals. The market demand analysis section should document what steps the sponsor has taken to judge the extent of student demand for the proposed program. For example: have surveys or focus groups been conducted with the relevant target market of students? Do demographic and occupational trends support the proposed program? What has the demand experience been at comparable institutions offering similar programs? (Include the specifics of such data if it has been gathered.) Because of the variety of possible new programs in a comprehensive university, it is impossible to specify a precise marketing research regimen that would apply to all possible colleges and departments. Educational target markets of opportunity obviously differ (e.g., there is a greater demand for law degrees than Masters in comparative literature). Economies of scale in different departments vary; that is, some departments have sufficient excess capacity to launch new programs without requiring significant additional resources. Some new programs will have substantial synergy with existing programs while still other proposals require stand alone offerings. In any event, it is important that all new program proposals cover at least the following basic market-related information:

- Describe the target market of students intended to be serviced by the new program. Descriptions might include age, qualifications, career goals, etc.
- Discuss the various factors (external and internal) that suggest adequate demand for this program.
- Address competitive programs that seek to serve the same target market of students and what their enrollment performance has been.

- List the programmatic characteristics that demonstrate how the proposed program is distinctive from competing programs (e.g., quality, geography, available financial aid, etc.).
- Provide evidence why the proposed program can be positioned in the "quality" sector of the market.
- Indicate how the new program incorporates any aspects of the Jesuit values and educational philosophy (e.g. an ethics component, opportunity for service learning, leadership opportunities for students, etc.).

Again, the degree of detail necessary to justify a particular program will vary depending upon the resource demands and innovative nature of the proposed program. Extensions of existing programs (e.g., a new minor) might require minimal market analysis. Custom marketing research may be done in select situations to better document the need and to analyze the competition, but it is not always required. For example, in the arrangement of the Marquette MBA program with GE Medical Systems minimum student demand is guaranteed as a prerequisite for offering the courses. In other cases, published secondary information (e.g., industry demand for intensive care nurses) may be sufficient to justify serving the market. However, all new program proposals will require a dedicated section that addresses demand expectations in some formal manner and answers the basic questions listed above. More rigorous evidence is required for programs with higher resource demands.

C. Business Analysis

All new program proposals should include a business analysis section structured to adhere to the cost study methodology used to financially evaluate existing programs. The following financial goals are desired in any new program:

- Positive cash flows over the evaluation period.
- Profitability after indirect costs by the final evaluation year.

1. Budget and Justifications

As the criteria for evaluating existing programs changes (i.e. cost study methodology) so will the requirements for new programs. See **Appendix B** for a detailed review of the categories of items that comprise Revenues, Expenses, Capital Expenses, and Start-up Costs. A budget projection worksheet must be completed, see **Appendix C**. A detailed justification of each item must accompany the budget projection worksheet.

2. Resource Needs

New programs will have additional impacts on current resources. Please include in the budget all associated costs with budget additions such as:

- Space utilization;
- Faculty set-up costs: computer, start-up, development, etc.
- Financial effect on other programs. Include a budget projection worksheet (Appendix C) for associated expense increases in other direct and support units.

D. Impact on Existing Programs

Every new program proposal must address how the new program will affect enrollment in existing programs, offering of current courses, etc.

E. Learning Outcomes and Program Effectiveness Evaluation

The new program proposal will include a formal **outcomes evaluation** section. Components of this section would include: student outcome/performance indicators, the direct and indirect methods of measurement of student outcomes, the structured process by which regular measurement of student outcomes will be conducted, analyzed, and shared, and how evaluation information will regularly be used to make program changes.

Therefore, all new program proposals should specify not only target enrollment levels and expected budgetary support requirements but proposed educational outcomes and direct and indirect student performance and satisfaction measurements as part of the proposal. These items will serve as the additional criteria that determine the continuation or eventual phase-out of the program. They should be developed at the department or college level and will be used as general norms against which to compare initial (three or five year) program performance. Obviously, the specific educational outcomes sought will be program and departmental specific. Assistance in developing the student learning outcomes and outcome assessment can be obtained by contacting the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Teaching.

Step Four: Full Program Proposal Approval Sequence

- A. Prior to submitting the proposal to Office of the Provost, the proposal must be reviewed by the Registrar for concurrence on title and course number. Once the registrar review is completed the proposal for the new program is formally submitted to Office of the Provost. The completed “Approval Form” should be included as the cover sheet (see **Appendix D**). As described above, the proposal should include a description of the proposed program, a dedicated section addressing marketing demand, a projected three year budget following the (new) business plan model (as specified by the Office of Finance), impact statement on current programs, and an outcomes evaluation section that articulates educational goals including discussion of how educational performance and student satisfaction will be measured. The Office of the Provost will work with the Office of Finance to establish whether the proposal is substantively complete.
- B. The proposal approval requirements based on the type of program are identified on the Program Approval Grid (See **Appendix E**) and are as follows:
 1. Proposal is submitted to the Office of the Provost. The proposal is then reviewed for completeness by the Vice Provosts for Undergraduate Teaching and Learning for undergraduate programs or by the Vice Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate School for graduate/professional programs. Once determine complete, financial analysis and enrollment reviews are conducted as required. The Provost will review for congruence with strategic planning and consult with the Planning council as required.

2. The Proposal is then submitted to the University Board of Undergraduate Studies (**BUS**) or the University Board of Graduate Studies (**UBGS**) for approval.
3. For new degrees, new majors, new certificate, or on-line programs the proposal is submitted to the **Academic Senate** for approval.
4. If approved the proposal is then submitted to the Provost for approval. The Provost will inform the President and Board of Trustees on approval of new minors, specializations, international study programs, certificates, specializations and on-line programs. New degrees or majors will be submitted to the President and Board of Trustees for approval.
5. Programs requiring **Board of Trustees** approval are approved with the understanding that it will be formally reviewed after three (graduate/professional) or five years (undergraduate) of operation or as determined by the Provost.

Step Five: Evaluation

A. Program Evaluation

1. Programs will be evaluated based upon the following:

Academic degree programs: Degree Life Cycle plus one year

- Undergraduate programs: 5 years
- Graduate programs: 3 years

Nonacademic Programs – Life Cycle or one year whichever is longer.

B. Financial Evaluation

1. The Financial evaluation process will consist of the following:

- Review of budget Projections;
- An evaluation of the new programs projected performance and its ability to meet or exceed the financial goals;
- An ongoing review of new program actual financial performance including a comparison to the original pro forma.