

Metropolitan State College of Denver Pursuit of Legislative Authorization to Offer Graduate Degree Programs

Impact on Metro State's Mission. Metro State seeks to amend the authorizing statute for Metro State, CRS 23-54-101, to allow the offering of master's level programs, but not programs at the doctoral level. Every other public baccalaureate institution in Colorado has statutory authority to offer graduate programs. In fact, Metro State is the only baccalaureate-granting institution in the nation with a headcount over 10,000 students that does not also grant at least some masters degrees (see **attachment 1**).

The proposed change to the original charter for Metropolitan State College of Denver would not be inconsistent with the current role and mission of the College, but rather an enhancement of its current mission, which states:

Metropolitan State College of Denver is a comprehensive, baccalaureate degree-granting, urban college that offers arts and science, professional and business courses and programs to a diverse student population. Excellence in teaching and learning is Metropolitan State College of Denver's primary objective.

The mission of Metropolitan State College of Denver is to provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, postgraduate education and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global and technological society. The College fulfills its mission by working in partnership with the community at large and by fostering an atmosphere of scholarly inquiry, creative activity and mutual respect within a diverse campus community.

Reasons for Enhancing Metro State's Mission. Metro State's mission particularly emphasizes the institution's importance in providing access. The development of master's degrees would provide the students Metro State already serves with **additional access to affordable education**.

The option for low-cost graduate study will promote participation in graduate study, particularly for first-generation college students and students from underrepresented groups, and especially for those who already attend Metro State.

The College's Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Task Force determined that **successful HSI colleges have graduate programs** (see **attachment 2**). The existence of graduate education will attract more faculty of color, and will increase participation in graduate education from students of color.

Cost Impact of Proposed Change. Proposals for master's level degree programs will be brought forward only when sufficient resources are available, and only when associated undergraduate programs will not be adversely affected by the addition of graduate programs. Existing upper-division courses will provide much of the coursework used for graduate degree programs, although some new courses would be needed. The experience of upper-division undergraduate students would be enhanced by their interaction with graduate students, in much the same way that the interaction of traditional and non-traditional students enhances the classroom experience. In some cases, advanced senior undergraduates would have the opportunity to take graduate-level courses, thereby also enhancing the undergraduate experience.

Implementation. Metro State's primary emphasis on teaching and learning at the undergraduate level will not be compromised. Metro State does not plan to use graduate teaching assistants as supplemental instructors. Graduate programs will be added to the extent that maintaining small class sizes and continuing to increase the number of tenure-track faculty teaching undergraduate courses is not compromised.

Metro State aspires to serve the metropolitan area consistent with the models provided by the California State University urban institutions. All of the peer institutions for Metro State that were selected by the Commission on Higher Education are comprehensive master's granting universities (see **attachment 3**). Under the Carnegie Classification System, Metro State would remain classified as a Baccalaureate College until it awarded more than 50 master's degrees in a single year. After achieving that milestone, the Carnegie Classification would be as a Master's College or University.

The existing tenure-track faculty includes many doctoral level experts who are fully prepared to teach at the graduate level; in fact many have such experience already. The addition of selected graduate programs would enhance research opportunities for faculty, and contribute to the recruitment and retention of excellent faculty.

In the case that a bill to amend Metro State's authorizing statute was introduced and passed during the 2009 legislative session, a limited number of graduate programs may be developed and considered during 2009-10, with an inception date no earlier than Fall 2010. Once the first graduate programs are approved by the Metro State governing board and sanctioned by the Department of Higher Education, a focused site visit would be arranged with Metro State's accreditation body, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), to consider a change in accreditation status.

Examples of three master's level academic programs. The three academic programs provided below as examples were chosen for illustrative purposes only; however, all three are positioned to offer graduate educations, with appropriate approvals. One program from each of the three schools at Metro State is included, to demonstrate how offering graduate programs can support Metro State's urban mission, the President's vision of preeminence, and the community and workforce needs of our seven-county service area. The data gathered for these programs suggests that there is a strong demand within the College's current student and alumni populations, for the offering of graduate degrees as well as a significant preference to obtain graduate education at Metro State. Furthermore, the data also indicate strong support from "key" professionals and community stakeholders for Metro State to offer graduate programs.

The three programs are: Teacher Education (master's in education), Accounting (master's of professional accountancy), and Social Work (master's in social work). Below are executive summaries that provide the primary findings in the areas of demand, resources, diversity/HSI and furthering Metro State's urban mission.

Masters in Education, MA Ed.

Metro State's Teacher Education Department trains candidates for K-12 teacher licensure, meeting a critical workforce need in Colorado. The programs within teacher education serve 10% of Metro State's total student headcount, and currently provide the largest number of undergraduate-prepared teachers in the state. However, a necessary and desirable part of a teacher's professional growth is continuing education, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Teachers need formal continuing education to maintain their licenses, and such training also promotes career advancement and makes them eligible for salary increases. An on-line survey was conducted, focused on current and post-baccalaureate students and alumni of Metro State's Teacher Education program. Students seeking teaching licensure currently number 2,160, of which 275 are post-baccalaureate students. Post-baccalaureate status indicates that students have already earned an undergraduate degree and are primarily attending Metro State with the sole purpose of earning recommendation for licensure. This student population is of particular interest because it constitutes an immediate "student pipeline" for entering a graduate teaching program at Metro State.

The survey resulted in responses from 589 students (a 26% response rate) yielding both quantitative and qualitative data. Below are “key” quantitative findings from the survey that indicate the need for a master’s in teaching program to enhance the mission of Metro State. (For a sampling of qualitative responses, see **attachment 4**).

- 95% indicated that they reside in the seven county area Metro State serves
- 90% indicated that they would like to pursue a master’s degree in teaching
- 91% indicated that they would choose Metro State to complete their master’s degree
- 70% of the students who responded were over 24 years of age, and 40% are first generation college students
- 80% of students enrolled in the post-baccalaureate, Teacher in Residence, CASEL, or alternative licensure programs would choose a program that would allow them to receive a master’s degree instead of a second bachelors or licensure coursework at Metro State.

Resources required for implementation of a graduate program in Teacher Education would be minimal at the outset. All current faculty in Metro State’s Department of Teacher Education have the requisite terminal degrees and are prepared to direct graduate studies. Curriculum can be developed and creatively offered in accelerated, weekend, and summer formats, to reduce the need for additional space.

Masters of Professional Accountancy, MPAcc

The Metro State Department of Accounting desires to remain competitive in Colorado. During 2010, the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies and the State Board of Accountancy will initiate establishment of the 150-hour-rule for CPA licensure in Colorado. Currently, Colorado is one of only six remaining states and territories to have the 120-hour, baccalaureate-only rule. Metro State accounting students will be disadvantaged for employment and professional opportunities without a quality, affordable graduate curriculum.

Currently 94 declared accounting majors at Metro State hold either baccalaureate or graduate degrees in some other discipline. Accounting is Metro State’s second highest student population with majors holding prior degrees. Declared accounting majors (860) contain the eighth greatest percentage of non-Caucasian students of all Metro State students. Hispanic students represent 14.1% of accounting majors compared to 13.26% of all Metro State students. Students of color comprise 32.0% of accounting majors.

The results of a recent survey of senior level accounting majors indicated that 93% of those planning to sit for the CPA exam would enroll in the MPAcc program. Of these, 23% selected the taxation track, 30% selected the fraud/forensic examination track, and 47% selected the accounting track with ability to customize. (For a sampling of qualitative responses, see **attachment 4**). This information suggests that there is an established “pipeline” for potential students for this program. Based upon current data, the department estimates the initial cohort of accounting graduate students could total about 119. A student will choose among three concentrations of study: (a) taxation, (b) fraud examination and forensic auditing, and (c) accounting. With these concentrations of distinction, students with a Metro State MPAcc will stand out to recruiters in the profession for the following reasons:

- The Taxation Concentration will be the only complete graduate tax curriculum in Colorado offered through an accounting department.
- The Fraud Examination and Forensic Auditing Concentration will be the only complete graduate fraud and forensic accounting curriculum between California and the Mississippi River. Currently, only eight such programs exist nationally.

- The Accounting Concentration permits students to customize their own plans of study. Regardless of how constructed, it will qualify the student to be licensed as a CPA in Colorado after passing all parts of the Uniform CPA Examination. The Accounting Concentration is for the auditor in public accounting, the government or not-for-profit accountant, or the accountant in private industry.

Metro State believes that growth and demand for the program will be strong and this program can be self-funded. After five years it is estimated that the program will generate a positive fund balance for the College.

Masters in Social Work, MSW

Metro State's Social Work program is prepared to offer a high quality, affordable and accessible master's degree in social work. In the field there are three levels of social work education: BSSW, MSW and PhD. The BSSW allows social workers to provide direct services to clients involving case management, advocacy and supportive services. The MSW is seen as the terminal degree for practitioners that allows social workers to become Licensed Clinical Social Workers (therapists) or Licensed Social Workers (community leaders). The Ph.D. is sought by those who wish to teach, do research, and perform at high levels in government agencies, etc.

Graduates of BSSW programs go on to advanced standing MSW programs where they only complete the second year of an MSW program. The reason for this is that they have had educational experiences equivalent to the first year of an MSW program while they were in an undergraduate BSSW program. Other majors such as sociology, psychology, behavioral science, criminal justice and human services would be required to complete the two-year MSW program. It is likely that a significant number of majors from these related disciplines would apply for the two year MSW program at Metro State.

The Social Work Department surveyed current students who were social work majors, and alumni of Metro State. The survey was e-mailed to approximately 240 students with a 48% response rate. The purpose of the survey was to determine the level of interest among current social work majors and to better understand the experiences of alumni who may or may not have continued on to earn their MSW. Below are key findings that indicate the need for a master's in social work program as it relates to the mission of Metro State (for a sampling of qualitative responses, see **attachment 4**):

- 80% indicated that they planned to earn a master's degree in social work
- 50% of alumni that did not earn their master's in social work indicated that they would return to Metro State to obtain this degree if possible
- 49% indicated that cost was the reason why they did not obtain their master's in Social Work.

Offering a master's in social work would align with Metro State's urban mission. Urban institutions have reciprocal relationships with their communities; each benefits from contact with the other in a vital and pragmatic way. Social work majors put into practice "community and civic engagement" in their coursework and in their lives. There is no shortage of agencies seeking student interns at the graduate or undergraduate level. Currently, there are over 260 agencies in the Metro State social work database. Many agencies go without interns. Agencies that are matched with a student benefit in many ways, including increased person hours to reduce the wait list for clients to receive services. Agencies frequently take interns from more than one social work school. The current social work enrollments across all schools cannot meet the need for agency-based interns. In fact, for the 2008-09 academic year, there were 186 open placement opportunities for Metro State's senior class of 65 students.