

TOPIC: PROPOSAL TO OFFER A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT AFFAIRS LEADERSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

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I. SUMMARY

The University of Northern Colorado (UNC) has submitted a proposal to offer a Master of Arts degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership (HESAL). The proposed degree program will offer an integrated higher education and student affairs curricula highlighting social justice and issues of equity; theory as a basis for practice in higher education and student affairs; ethical leadership; and scholarship practices. The program blends a variety of topics from student development and culture to higher education finance and law to issues of organization, administration, and leadership.

II. BACKGROUND

The following is summarized from the University of Northern Colorado's request:

The objectives of the proposed master's degree program are to prepare ethical professionals to assume leadership positions in higher education and student affairs. Students will learn to understand the complexities of student development and how to provide direct services to them. In addition, they will learn organizational dynamics and legal and financial environments in higher education administration. Effective leadership in academic and policy arenas will also be two important areas of knowledge. They will also learn to understand and address social justice and any issues of equity pertaining to higher education. Lastly, they will learn to apply theory and research as a basis for practice

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports the role and mission of the University of Northern Colorado. The statutory mission states:

There is hereby established a university at Greeley to be known as the university of northern Colorado. The university shall be a comprehensive baccalaureate and specialized graduate research university with selective admission standards. The university of Northern Colorado shall be the primary institution for undergraduate and graduate degree programs for educational personnel preparation in the state of Colorado. The university shall offer masters and doctoral programs primarily in the field of education. C.R.S. 23-40-101

EVIDENCE OF STUDENT DEMAND

Currently, the HESAL curriculum is located within the Education Leadership Program as a concentration. A review of the emphasis program revealed students enroll in the Educational Leadership MA with an emphasis in HESAL because of a desire to enroll in a program which focuses singularly on a higher education versus a K-12 setting. Within the last year, the student affairs discipline has been identified as a growing need for professionals in this field. Moreover, with a high percent of the student affairs workforce retiring over the next five to ten years there will be new demands for professionals in the field. Additionally, a Master's in HESAL will help train competent entry to mid-level professionals who can effectively work with a diverse student body and who understand the context of student success within the university.

DUPLICATION/SIMILAR PROGRAMS IN THE STATE

At present a handful of universities in Colorado offer some version of a master's degree in higher education and student affairs. However, the proposed degree program at UNC will be unique from other programs in that their curriculum will focus on providing students the information they need to work with a diverse population of college students in a culturally competent manner. UNC will also focus their recruiting efforts to enroll and graduate more students of color, first-generation, and low SES and to deliver our program so it will be accessible to part-time and full time professionals who work in a university or community college setting.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129 (6)(b), Department staff finds that the proposed graduate program is in the field of education. It fits the centrality of the institution's statutory role and mission to be the primary institution for undergraduate and graduate degree programs for educational personnel preparation in the state of Colorado.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership is consistent with the University of Northern Colorado's campus role and mission. Staff recommends that the Commission approve this degree.

V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Copies of all relevant materials are on file in the Academic Affairs office and are available upon request.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129(6)(b)

(6)(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.