

**TOPIC:                    PROPOSAL TO OFFER A MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN  
CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP AT COLORADO STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**PREPARED BY:    MARGOT PLOTZ**

**I.        SUMMARY**

Colorado State University (CSU) has submitted a proposal to offer a Master of Science in Conservation Leadership. The proposed program will prepare natural resource professionals for international work in the field through a core of courses combined with field work abroad. The program emphasizes a system approach to resource management. The goal of the program is to attract, educate, and inspire a new generation of generalist practitioners who will provide leadership in natural resource conservation and environmental sustainability.

**II.      BACKGROUND**

The following is summarized from Colorado State University's proposal:

The natural resource conservation field is in need of leaders that can tackle the increasingly complex and multi-dimensional conservation problems facing society. After surveying several principal employers of its graduate students across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, CSU identified a strong need to train generalist practitioners that have a strong foundation in science, leadership, and management. These generalist practitioners need to be able to engage in cross-disciplinary problem solving, to work in cross-cultural and cross-boundary contexts, and to be comfortable with and skilled at operating in an environment of increasing complexity and uncertainty. The proposed program will strengthen CSU's ability to train the next generation of conservation leaders.

**ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT**

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

*There is hereby established a college at Ft. Collins, to be known as Colorado state university. Colorado state university shall be a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards offering a comprehensive array of baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. Consistent with the tradition of land grant universities, Colorado state university has exclusive authority to offer graduate and undergraduate programs in agriculture, forestry, natural resources, and veterinary medicine. The Colorado commission on higher education, in consultation with the board of governors of the Colorado state*

*university system, shall designate those graduate level programs that are the primary responsibility of Colorado state university. C.R.S. 23-31-101*

#### **EVIDENCE OF NEED**

CSU conducted one on one interviews and focus groups consisting of many recently employed graduates from CSU's natural resource college and potential future employers. CSU developed the program based on what was heard in the field. The feedback received was that universities do a great job of creating specialists scientists with a deep knowledge in a very specific area of expertise but generally they do not do a good job preparing generalist practitioners for the reality that awaits them in the field. These generalists need to be aware of multiple issues and be able to see the overall picture. This understanding coupled with a solid knowledge of the tools and disciplinary strengths will enable them to oversee projects and make better decisions about how to tackle complex environmental problems.

#### **DUPLICATION**

There are no other programs in Colorado that duplicate the proposed program. There are however several that echo the interdisciplinary philosophy and systems perspective of the program but each has a unique focus and offer very different content.

#### **III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129 (6)(b), Department staff finds that the proposed program fits the centrality of the institution's statutory role and mission to offer a comprehensive array of baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degree programs in the state of Colorado.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Master of Science in Conservation Leadership is consistent with Colorado State University's campus role and mission. Staff recommends that the Commission approve this degree program.**

#### **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.