

**TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN TAXATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER**

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**I. SUMMARY**

This item recommends approval for University of Colorado Denver (UCD) to offer a Master of Science in Taxation degree.

**II. BACKGROUND**

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is limited to review for fit with statutory role and mission, per §23-5-129(6)(b), C.R.S.

**OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM**

The following is summarized from UCD's proposal:

The degree will require 30 credit hours, comprised of ten courses in tax-related issues that can be completed by full-time students in one year, or by part-time students in two years. The Business School already has enough tax-related courses to offer an MS in Taxation and currently offers a specialization in tax designation to students in its MA in Accounting program who complete four tax courses. An MS in Taxation degree will provide a more valuable and marketable degree for individuals seeking the Tax Specialization designation. Students who graduate from the program will be able to enter the Denver business community, or other business communities throughout the country, with the skills competently and ethically required to advise participants within those communities on tax-related matters.

Additional information on this proposed degree, unrelated to fit with statutory role and mission, is attached (Appendix A).

**ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT**

This degree supports UCD's statutory role and mission, which states:

*(b) The Denver campus of the university of Colorado shall be an urban comprehensive undergraduate and graduate research university with selective admission standards. The Denver campus shall offer baccalaureate, master's, and a limited number of doctoral degree programs, emphasizing those that serve the needs*

*of the Denver metropolitan area. The Denver campus has statewide authority to offer graduate programs in public administration and exclusive authority in architecture and planning. C.R.S. §23-20-101*

### **III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that the institution's proposed degree is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The proposed program is on the agenda to be approved by the CU Board of Regents at its April 29, 2014 meeting.

### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends that the Commission approve University of Colorado Denver's proposal to offer a Master of Science in Taxation degree pending approval by the CU Board of Regents.**

### **STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

C.R.S. §23-5-129 Governing boards - performance contract - authorization – operations

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education:  
(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.

### **APPENDIX:**

Appendix A: Additional Information

## **APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

This additional information is unrelated to the proposed degree's fit with the institution's statutory role and mission. The following is summarized from the institution's proposal:

### **EVIDENCE OF NEED**

Large accounting firms within the metropolitan Denver area, as well as nationwide, who are looking for tax specialists now prefer hiring individuals with an MS in Taxation degree, over those who have an MS in Accounting degree. A survey of job listings performed in late July 2013, indicated that websites such as Simply Hired, Career Builder, Denver Post and Indeed.com had numerous postings for tax-related positions. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) predicts significant growth through the year 2020 in job prospects for accountants and auditors (16%), as well as tax professionals (7%) in the form of tax examiners, collectors, and agents. With regard to the future job prospects of accountants and auditors, the BLS states that "*applicants who have a master's degree in accounting or a master's degree in business with a concentration in accounting also may have an advantage.*" The BLS also notes that factors such as additional and stricter laws and regulations will likely increase the demand for accounting services as organizations seek to comply with new standards and laws. This would be true for areas in the financial sector and in taxation. The Director of the program at Georgia State University which offers a similar MS in Tax degree stated that the placement of their graduates "has been nearly 100%." This proposal is also supported by letters from eleven different accounting or other firms with offices in Denver (including PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and Ernst & Young LLP) who express great interest in hiring graduates of the program.

In the spring 2013 semester, 13 students enrolled in the MS in Accounting program undertook the Tax specialization. The Business School has added six new courses in taxation over the past three years. In view of the strong workforce demand for individuals with an MS in Taxation degree, as well as the interest expressed by local accounting and other businesses, the Business School projects that the number of new students will increase from 12 in year one to 20 incoming students in year four and beyond.

### **DUPLICATION**

Department staff confirm that a search for Master's in Taxation in the SURDS database revealed no other master's degrees by this name at public Colorado institutions of higher education. UCD faculty report there are only 15 institutions in the U.S. that currently offer an MS in Taxation degree.