

**TOPIC: PROPOSAL TO OFFER A MASTER'S IN NATURAL SCIENCE
 AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

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I. SUMMARY

This consent item recommends approval of Colorado State University's (CSU) proposal to offer a Master's in Natural Science (MNS).

II. BACKGROUND

The following is summarized from CSU's proposal:

CSU's proposal to offer a Master's in Natural Science degree is in response to the nationwide trend toward professionalization of masters-level education. Most fields in the natural sciences have long viewed masters-level degrees primarily as milestones en route to a doctorate. In the last decade or so, universities began conceptualizing new master's programs that develop advanced scientific training along with professional skills such as communication and management. In CSU's proposal, most students will earn the Bachelor's and Master's concurrently, i.e. in 5 years. This program couples a BS in any of the Natural Sciences disciplines with MNS coursework that complements the undergraduate program. This degree concept allows CSU to move expeditiously and efficiently into new and promising areas, quickly responding to interest and demand in various areas such as clean energy and biotechnology.

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports the role and mission of CSU. The statutory mission states:

There is hereby established a university at Fort 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

This unique specialization will be attractive to high ability high school students and undergraduate science students for several reasons. First, they focus on emerging and exciting fields in science and mathematics. Second, the degree is interdisciplinary and will result in a broad, marketable skill set. Third, students ultimately complete a Master's in Natural Science degree, and there is a clear, concise curriculum to achieve the degree in a timely manner. A professional adviser in the Dean's office will coordinate and help direct the students' progress. Fourth, all of the specializations will include real-world, internship experience with local business and non-profit agencies.

DUPLICATION

There are currently no Master's in Natural Sciences degrees at any other Colorado public institution.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute 23-5-129 (6)(b), department staff finds that CSU's proposed Master's in Natural Sciences (MNS) is consistent with CSU's role and mission.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve Colorado State University proposal to offer a Master's in Natural Science.

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) 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.

