

**TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF MASTER OF STUDIES IN  
LAW AT UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER**

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ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

**I. SUMMARY**

This item recommends approval for University of Colorado Boulder (UCB) to offer a Master of Studies in Law (MSL).

**II. BACKGROUND**

**COMMISSION AUTHORITY**

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review and approval of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is defined in §23-5-129(6)(b), which states that new and modified program proposals shall be reviewed and approved only on the basis of fit with the institution's statutory role and mission.

**III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

**OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM**

The Masters of Studies in Law (MSL) degree will be a one-year program requiring twenty-eight credits of coursework that enables students who hold at least an undergraduate degree to obtain legal training short of a full JD. Additional information on this proposed degree, unrelated to fit with statutory role and mission, is in Appendix A.

**ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT**

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

*(a) The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall be a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall offer a comprehensive array of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado has exclusive authority to offer graduate programs in law. The Colorado commission on higher education, in consultation with the board of regents, shall designate those graduate level programs that are the primary responsibility of the Boulder campus of the*

*university of Colorado. The university has the responsibility to provide on a statewide basis, utilizing when possible and appropriate the faculty and facilities of other educational institutions, those graduate level programs. The commission shall include in its funding recommendations a level of general fund support for these programs. [§23-20-101(1), C.R.S.]*

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that UCB's proposed Master of Studies in Law degree is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. CU's Board of Regents approved the program at its November 19, 2014 meeting.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends that the Commission approve the Master of Studies in Law at University of Colorado Boulder.**

#### **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: Supplemental Information

## **APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

This supplemental 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**

Our proposal is significantly market driven. Just as an increasing number of medical tasks now are handled by nurse practitioners (as opposed to doctors), an increasing number of legal tasks are handled by non-lawyers. Moreover, a wide variety of business roles require some legal knowledge in order to be effective at their jobs. Thus, at the same time that demand for traditional JD programs is falling (the number of U.S. law school applicants in 2013 fell by over 45% from 2009 numbers), demand for more limited legal training programs is increasing. Proof of the workforce demand for graduates with MSL-type degrees is found in the number of law schools who have developed these degree programs recently.

The MSL will draw from a pool of highly qualified persons with bachelor's degrees, a large and rapidly growing pool within the state and region. We anticipate that many students will be attracted to the prospect of prestigious and well-paying careers in law that do not require the commitment of time or money required to fund a traditional JD. Some of the best evidence of student demand for MSL-type programs comes from the rapid adoption of MSL-type programs by other schools. According to a 2013 ABA report, in the Fall of 2013, a total of 62 ABA-accredited law schools -- including 13 of the top 50 law schools (as ranked by U.S. News) -- had some form of MSL program, with a total of 1,738 students enrolled nationally.

### **DUPLICATION**

No program at the University of Colorado is substantially similar to the proposed MSL. There are synergies between this program and other masters programs in the system, including but not limited to degrees offered by the ATLAS Institute, Interdisciplinary Telecommunications Program, Leeds Business School, and College of Engineering. We also note synergistic parallels to the program in Environmental Leadership, Policy & Planning being developed by the Environmental Studies Program. The University of Denver School of Law offers several comparable masters degrees, but our analysis suggests that our degree will differ in several significant respects and, if there are any similarities, there is room in the Colorado market for two such programs.