REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY: MASTER OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by Iowa State University for a Master of Community Development in the College of Design.

The Council of Provosts and Board office support approval of this program.

Description of proposed program. The proposed Master of Community Development (MCD) converts an existing online Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies (IGS) Program associated with the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (GPIDEA). That program is currently offered online by Iowa State in conjunction with Kansas State University, University Nebraska – Lincoln, South Dakota State University and North Dakota State University.

Approximately 25 Iowa State University graduate students are enrolled in the existing GPIDEA/IGS program. It is proposed that by the start date of August 2022, a new online MCD degree independent of the GPIDEA and the IGS program be established within the College of Design and the Department of Community and Regional Planning. The proposed program moves the existing degree out of the GPIDEA and offers it entirely within ISU. It will use much of the existing curriculum that is contained in the current ISU Course Catalog. All ISU students currently enrolled in the community development GPIDEA program will be enrolled in the new program, and be allowed to apply their earned credits toward their degree.

The proposed program offers several advantages. These include: 1) bringing the program in-house provides significant new revenue streams to the university, the college and the department; 2) simplifying the administration of the program, including reducing the layers of oversight; 3) creating a more streamlined curriculum, that will allow a shorter time to completion and higher completion rates; 4) allowing full control of recruitment and admission of new students into the degree program.

The MCD degree provides students with graduate training in community development theory, community data analysis, community engagement, community development methods, program development and evaluation. The program is a coursework-only degree. It is geared toward working professionals seeking graduate training, most of whom are currently employed in the public service sector. The program is structured to include 30 credit hours of cohort-based learning delivered over 24 months as online courses. The curriculum includes five core courses and five electives. The curriculum takes advantage of existing coursework already found in the current ISU catalog and current experimental courses slated to be included in the catalog by August 2022. Only the required practicum course will need to be developed.

Core courses will be taught over a two-year sequence with the 10 electives offered through the Department of Community and Regional Planning on a two-year rotation. Summer offerings are planned as part of this rotation. With this annual seven-course offering, and assuming a relatively even distribution, the program could be sustained with as few as 240 student credit hours annually (or, 20 students taking four courses annually). A 30-hour degree offered at ISU would cost students $5,400 less than the 36-hour program offered through GPIDEA.
Academic objectives. For the purposes of this degree program, we will utilize the definition of community development adopted by the International Association of Community Development (IACD), the Community Development Society (CDS), and the National Association of Extension Community Development Professionals (NACDEP). This definition reads as follows:

*Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity and social justice, through the organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings.*

Within the context of this definition, following learning outcomes are expected:

- Acquire practical and theoretical knowledge of community development program design, implementation and evaluation
- Demonstrate the ability to implement community development strategies within both urban and rural settings;
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and utilize theoretical and analytical constructs of community;
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of community analytics including demographic analysis, community power structures, community organization, community economic analysis and regional context;
- Develop competencies for leadership, negotiation and successful verbal and written communication;
- Demonstrate the ability to design and implement a community engagement plan involving an inclusive community process; and
- Develop professional networks with others in the profession through program facilitated interactions, practicums, and membership in professional organizations.

- Demonstrate knowledge and the ability to apply the Principles of Good Practice as articulated by the Community Development Society.

Need for program. The market or need for the ISU Community Development program is well documented. The GPIDEA Community Development online program was initiated in 1996 with a grant from the USDA to Iowa State University and the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. Students are registered with one of the five participating universities, thus creating over 21 years of documentation as to need and demand.

The portion of the ISU program’s registration is such that even with separation from the GPIDEA, and with a degree that requires fewer credits and entails a lower tuition cost, the program is financially sustainable. Current completion rate is 64% with the mean time for completion at 3.5 years. We believe that the new in-house program would lower transaction costs associated with program for both students and faculty and therefore increase graduation rates among this pool of distance students. Historically, among the GPIDEA-partnering universities within the Community Development master’s degree, Iowa State University constitutes almost one-third of the total student credit hours and enrolled students (see Figure 1). Nine new students were accepted into the program as ISU students during the 2019 calendar year.
Data from the existing program indicate a relatively stable base of students. Most students are enrolled in the program are from the Upper Midwest (see figure 2). However, registration within the past three years to the ISU program include residents from Chile and the Marianas Islands.
Relationship to existing programs at the institution. The proposed change would incorporate a number of existing online courses offered at ISU. It should help supplement enrollment in these courses. The proposed transition also uses existing cataloged courses in the Community and Regional Planning Program likely to enhance enrollment in those courses as well.

The GPIDEA program will likely continue with the four remaining universities without ISU participation. The proposed ISU curriculum would allow use of some of these online courses and additional online ISU courses as appropriate electives and agreed to in student plans of study.

The existing degree is housed within the Interdisciplinary Graduate Study (IGS) program within the ISU Graduate College. Yet, the degree has its own courses in the catalog, has a set curriculum, and is based within one department on campus. None of these requirements follow IGS guidelines. It is in many ways administratively an orphan program within the current system.

Transition to a program at ISU would 1) provide clarity for program marketing and the application process for prospective students, 2) allow students more opportunity to finish the program, 3) allow for more flexibility in the program for course development, and 4) allow better coordination with other programs at ISU and 5) better utilization of existing courses offered at ISU both within and outside the Department of Community and Regional Planning.

Relationship to existing programs at other colleges and universities. None of the public universities in Iowa offers graduate or undergraduate programs in the field of community development. The University of Iowa School of Urban and Regional Planning does offer a Master’s Degree in Urban and Regional Planning with one of five concentrations in the area of housing and community development. The University of Iowa’s accredited planning program is not offered at a distance. As is the case with the existing GPIDEA degree, there would be very little overlap or competition for students between the two programs. None of Iowa’s private colleges offers bachelor or master’s degrees in community development.

Resources to establish a high-quality program. This proposal is to create the degree out of an existing program. The base of students and courses are already in place.

All courses offered by this program will be delivered online. Faculty within the CRP department have been involved in the delivery of the GPIDEA program since 1996. The CALS Brenton Center has provided the staff for delivery of the existing program online for a percentage of the tuition proceeds. This relationship would continue to exist with the transition to the proposed model of an ISU MCD program. A small amount of additional funds will be requested from the College of Design for revamping the program web site and to provide marketing and advertising funds to alert potential students.

A combination of existing CRP faculty supplemented with lecturers will be utilized to teach the revised curriculum. On average, seven MCD courses will be taught and made available online through the department. Over half the CRP faculty have already served on graduate committees related to the current GPIDEA program. Courses taught by CRP faculty will be taught as part of their normal teaching load or during the summer.

Student demand. As noted above, the program already has history dating back to 1996 with a track record of student enrollment at ISU. This proposal would simply create a degree that would remove the program from Interdisciplinary Studies and the GPIDEA. Marketing in Iowa and other Midwest states would be expanded to allow prospective students information on the ISU program.
Workforce need/demand. Demand has remained strong for the five-university GPIDEA community development program since its inception since 1996. The program has averaged over 100 students annually with ISU enrolling on average over 30% of those students. By offering the MCD degree online, the demand for the degree with adequate marketing should increase because: 1) the curriculum proposed would be able to be completed more quickly, 2) the program will be easier to navigate for nontraditional, distance-education students, and 3) the cost for students will be approximately $5,400 less than the current program.

Funding and Cost. Through the infrastructure of Iowa State’s budget model financial resources follow students and are allocated based on majors and teaching that is conducted. Tuition revenue will include both base tuition and applicable differential rates. The proposed degree program will be funded through this existing, proven financial model, and is expected to be fully self-sustaining over time. In addition, financial resources may also come from internal reallocations made within the college during the program’s startup phase. The level of reallocation will depend, in part, on the numbers of new students attracted to the proposed program, and the number of existing students who choose the proposed program over another program, based on standard and differential tuition rates. The proposed program will not be dependent on grants, contracts, gifts, central university resources, or reallocations between academic colleges.

The department has the necessary faculty in place to begin offering the program. This program will not require investments in fixed expenses such as facility renovations, information technology software or licenses.

Projected student enrollment. The program admits graduate level students.

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Iowa and the Midwest have demonstrated to be a good market for these students. Only the GPIDEA degree and Penn State University have similar online degrees. The department estimates that with transition that the level of participation will remain stable for the first two years and then begin to grow. An initial cohort of 25 or more students is based on: (1) The current ISU/GPIDEA enrollment, (2) higher graduation rates of ISU-GPIDEA students transferring into the new program due to the lower credit total needed, (3) growth will be seen with the larger cohorts in the third year and beyond as the new program becomes stable. Non-major estimates are based upon past enrollment rates of non-majors in the GPIDEA C DEV program from ISU.

Accreditation. There is no additional programmatic accreditation needed for this program.

Evaluation plan. The program will be part of the standard ISU evaluation processes.