

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA:
BACHELOR OF APPLIED SCIENCES PROGRAM IN
TACTICAL EMERGENCY SERVICES WITH VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to establish a new Bachelor of Applied Sciences Program in Tactical Emergency Services with Vulnerable Populations in the Division of Continuing Education.

Executive Summary: The proposed program will provide an opportunity for community college graduates to complete a bachelor's degree. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to "provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality" and Goal #8 – "Iowa's public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive."

Background:

- ◇ **Description of proposed program.** The proposed program is designed to meet the needs of working professionals who completed an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree and who wish to complete a Bachelor's degree for career advancement. The proposed program is designed for practitioners of tactical emergency services who are interested in earning a bachelor's degree with specialization in diverse and vulnerable populations in their technical fields.
- ◇ **Academic objectives.** The proposed program will provide a specialization in serving unique, vulnerable, and special populations. The academic objectives of the proposed program include the following:
 - ⇒ Students will be part of a training program that can provide technical assistance to address the unique needs of immigrant, refugee, and other special populations in the field of emergency services.
 - ⇒ Students will be provided skills in crisis and emergency communication to interact with special, vulnerable populations.
 - ⇒ Students will be provided experiences that have an emphasis on special populations, one of UNI's major strengths in disaster and emergency management.
- ◇ **Need for proposed program.** The BAS degree program is an option for those individuals who have completed a two-year AAS degree and now seek to get a four-year degree that will allow them to have opportunities in supervision and management positions. The proposed program will achieve the following: (a) provide a streamlined, understandable pathway for AAS degree students to complete a four-year degree; (b) offer flexible learning options, including online coursework, for place-bound students who wish to complete their bachelor's degree; (c) build upon students' technical and applied skills from their AAS degree and related work experience, with a strong general education core and upper level coursework that builds upon previous coursework; (d) enhance students' written and oral communication workplace and managerial skills; and (e) increase students' abilities to use critical thinking skills while on the job.

The BAS in Tactical Emergency Services with Vulnerable Populations was proposed in response to demand/interest on the part of Iowa's community colleges, the Iowa Department of Public Safety, the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy and local EMS, fire, emergency management and law enforcement agencies as well as the Iowa National Guard. The target market will be pre- and in-service emergency service providers who have an AAS degree and who would like to earn their Bachelor's degree while continuing to work and live in their communities. This degree will serve Iowa, the Midwest and the U.S. by training a new cadre of EM providers who will acknowledge and provide culturally responsive services to the nation's rapidly growing and diversifying populations. There are many online degree programs in emergency management but UNI will provide the nation's first and only program with a specialization in diversity and vulnerable populations.

By the time they graduate, students with a BAS degree will be able to (a) write and speak effectively in a workplace setting; (b) use quantitative and scientific data to address diverse problems and situations; (c) use methods of critical inquiry to describe and analyze human behavior from a variety of perspectives; (d) develop knowledge of the complex interplay of culture, history, and human experience; and (e) link theory and research to participate in problem-solving in a variety of settings.

- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. UNI is committed to expanding access to affordable, high-quality educational opportunities, as well as promoting economic development in the state of Iowa. As a result, UNI has developed a strong pathway for community college graduates to earn a four-year degree. Indeed, about a third of the UNI student body is comprised of transfer students. This commitment is reinforced by the fact that more than 90% of UNI's students are from Iowa, and the vast majority of UNI's graduates stay and work in Iowa. Thus, UNI can act as an important conduit for Iowa's community college students as they work toward their four-year degrees and contribute to the economic vitality of the state.

The proposed program addresses UNI's strategic plan. UNI's vision is that "The University of Northern Iowa will be nationally known for innovative education, preparing students for success in a rapidly changing, globally competitive, and culturally diverse world." A fully online BAS program offers innovative education for the State of Iowa. The program will result in more highly qualified employees in Iowa's workforce, employees who will have increased their critical thinking, verbal, and written communication skills.

In particular, the proposed program meets UNI's Goal 1 to "be a leading undergraduate public university that provides a strong liberal arts foundation," as well as Goal 5, "enhance the economic, social, cultural, and sustainable development of the state." The program helps "provide support for the economic, social, and sustainable development priorities of Iowa" (G5.O2.S1) and "supports workforce development by assisting state and regional workforce initiatives, including those that serve refugee and immigrant populations" (G5.O2.S3). In addition, the program supports Goal 6 of the university, to "ensure accountability, affordability, and access" by increasing "the number of non-traditional and distance learners" (G6.O2), and strengthening "relationships with community colleges to improve transfer students' transition process" (G6.O2.S3).

- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at UNI. The proposed program will enhance degree attainment because it will simplify the transfer of credits from an AAS degree to UNI. The proposed program will have a compressed, distributed liberal arts core (21-30 credit hours) because students will have already met many of the core requirements in their AAS degree. The major will require 30 credit hours at most; therefore, with their LAC/electives of 30 credit hours, students may complete the program with 60 credit hours.
- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at other colleges and universities. There are a few similar programs to UNI's proposed program, including the Bachelor of Applied Studies degree at the University of Iowa, the Bachelor of Applied Sciences degree (with an emphasis in Applied Management) at Buena Vista University, and the Bachelor of Applied Sciences degree at Waldorf College.

The BASc Applied Management Major at Buena Vista University consists of 60 hours of credit, divided between 21 hours of core courses¹ and 39 hours in the major. It is a degree completion program and students with any associate degree from an accredited institution can qualify for the program. However, there is not the emphasis on the Liberal Arts Core that there is in UNI's program, which has 21-30 credit hours, and cost is higher at this private institution.

Waldorf College offers Bachelor of Applied Sciences degrees in Business Administration, Communications, Criminal Justice, Criminal Justice Administration, Emergency Management, Fire Science Administration, Health Care Management, Homeland Security, Occupational Safety, Organizational Leadership, and Psychology. Their BAS degrees consist of 30 hours of general education requirements², 30 hours of major requirements and 60 hours of professional electives taken at Waldorf College. The major programs are somewhat similar to what we are proposing at UNI, in terms of makeup of the program; however, there are several differences stated below.

The University of Iowa Bachelor of Applied Studies degree offers individualized general studies plans of 60 hours, with optional emphasis areas (or certificates), ranging from 12-20 hours, in Entrepreneurial Management, Nonprofit Management, Public Health, Creative Writing, Human Relations, Justice Studies, and Political Science.

There is no Bachelor of Applied Sciences degree at the Regent institutions. UNI's proposed program is most similar to the BAS degrees from Waldorf College in terms of content but does differ in several respects. First, the UNI program is a degree completion program and is focused on recruiting AAS degree holders in contrast to BAS students from Waldorf College who complete the entire degree at the institution. The BAS in Tactical Emergency Services with Vulnerable Populations is designed for practitioners of tactical emergency services who are interested in earning a Bachelor's degree with specialization in diverse and vulnerable populations in their technical fields. This major is unique and different from the BAS in Emergency Services from Waldorf College in that it focuses on providing services for diverse and vulnerable populations, the only program to do so in the country. The program consists of 30 hours of major coursework that includes a field practicum project serving vulnerable populations and 30 hours of LAC/elective requirements.

¹ <https://www.bvu.edu/gps/programs/bachelor-of-applied-science/basc-applied-management>

² (<http://www.waldorf.edu/online/academics/major-core-requirements/bachelor-of-applied-science>)

- ◇ Unique features. UNI's unique mission to provide accessible education for multiple populations, and its willingness to embrace growth in online education makes UNI well-suited for this type of degree program. UNI's focus on undergraduate education makes it a good place to offer this degree program, especially since such a degree meets several of the university's strategic plan goals.

Regional comprehensive universities, such as UNI, are the desirable and appropriate type of institutions to house this type of degree program. The faculty at a comprehensive university have a workload that emphasizes teaching which can include significant community engagement. There are faculty who have been teaching online for some time, and have great support for online coursework development through UNI's Division of Continuing Education and Special Programs. The BAS in Tactical Emergency Services with Vulnerable Populations is well positioned to be offered because UNI has a unique set of faculty who are nationally and internationally recognized for their work on the interaction between disaster/emergency managers, law enforcement, fire services personnel and emergency medical service personal and immigrant, refugee, minority, underserved and other special and vulnerable populations. The training and technical assistance in this area are uniquely provided by UNI's New Iowans Center and Center on Health Disparities. UNI has one of the handful of communication studies faculty in the U.S. today who specialize in crisis and emergency communications.

- ◇ Resources. To support the implementation of the proposed program, online course development will be available through the Division of Continuing Education and Special Program. The initial investment of coursework for each cohort, which includes two courses per semester, one from the major and one from the Liberal Arts Core, appears to be workable without the need for additional resources initially. As the program grows, there may be a need for a new faculty line for each increment of 60 students and new support positions commensurate with additional work; allocation of new resources will be negotiated between the college deans and the Office of the Provost.

- ◇ Student demand. The target audience for the Bachelor's in Applied Science degree includes the graduates of the Associate of Applied Science programs offered by Iowa's 15 community colleges. These graduates have typically used their AAS degree training to secure employment in their field of study at entry-level positions. After years of dedicated service, many of them have advanced through the technical ranks and are either seeking or being asked to move into management, which typically requires a bachelor's degree. The proposed program will attract individuals with technical expertise and interest in the area disaster emergency services who need the upper-level coursework to develop their management, communication and leadership skills.

BAS degrees have been successfully used in many universities outside of Iowa for this purpose, so there are good models to follow. Furthermore, interest has already been gauged through the Technology Management BA that articulates AAS degrees on a program-by-program basis. This program recently started with a full cohort of students and has recently accepted its third cohort.

- ◇ Duplication. The proposed program is not expected to duplicate any existing program in the state. The following programs are available statewide: Bachelor of Applied Sciences with emphasis in Applied Management (Buena Vista University); Bachelor of Applied Studies (University of Iowa); Bachelor of Applied Sciences with programs in Business Administration, Communications, Criminal Justice, Criminal Justice Administration, Emergency Management, Fire Science Administration, Health Care Management, Homeland Security, Occupational Safety, Organizational Leadership, and Psychology (Waldorf College).
- ◇ Workforce need/demand. According to the Iowa Department of Education Community College Division, during the past five years, the number of AAS degrees awarded by Iowa community colleges has ranged from 4,406 to 5,223. Several of the areas in which there in which the greatest number of AAS degree have been granted are relevant to the proposed program, including health science; business, management, and administration; manufacturing; architecture and construction; transportation, distribution, and logistics; and law, public safety, and security.
- ◇ Consultation with representatives of other programs. Formal consultations with Regent institutions have not been undertaken because there is not a comparable degree at either SUI or ISU; however, this program was presented to the Council of Provosts and communication with colleagues from both institutions has occurred with regard to sharing online courses for the program. Informal conversations have occurred with representatives of Iowa's community colleges. Formal conversations have also not occurred with private institutions. However, intent to office the proposed program has gone through the Iowa Coordinating Council review and there were no negative comments.
- ◇ Cost. The total cost for the proposed program is expected to be \$130,000 during Year One, increasing to \$155,000 during Year Seven. The costs are expected to be covered by tuition revenues and department/college reallocations.
- ◇ Projected enrollment. The enrollment is expected to be 20 students per year.
- ◇ Anticipated sources of students. The primary source of students will be students who graduated from an Iowa community college with an AAS degree.
- ◇ Articulation agreement. Articulation agreements will be pursued with all 15 community colleges.
- ◇ Off-campus delivery. The proposed program will be offered primarily through online instruction by UNI faculty members. The program will not require additional HLC accreditation.
- ◇ Opportunities for internships. Internships will be required for the proposed program.

- ◇ Marketing plan. Upon approval of the proposed program, marketing brochures and email communications developed through the Office of Continuing and Distance Education will be distributed to targeted AAS degree graduates. Lists will be developed in consultation with the community colleges. Admissions counselors who advise transfer students will provide information to interested students at Iowa's community colleges. Communications between UNI faculty in specific programs will occur with representatives of Iowa community colleges.
- ◇ Evaluation plan. All programs, including online programs, undergo the Academic Program Review process. To implement the proposed program, online course development support and student services support will be provided by the Division of Continuing Education and Special Programs.
- ◇ Date of implementation. Creation of the proposed program will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the University's General Catalog. The anticipated implementation date is Fall 2016.