

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A NAME CHANGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA:
MASTER OF LAWS PROGRAM IN INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE LAW TO
MASTER OF LAWS PROGRAM**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to change the name of the Master of Laws Program in International and Comparative Law to the Master of Laws Program in the College of Law.

Executive Summary: The proposed name change will more accurately reflect the full range of studies undertaken by graduate students. This request has been reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to pursue “educational excellence and impact” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and effective.”

Background:

- ◇ **Description of program.** The Master of Laws Program in International and Comparative Law is specifically designed for (1) foreign-trained jurists who seek a comparative introduction to and specific training in United States law and legal institutions; and (2) foreign-trained jurists or graduates of JD programs in the United States who wish to deepen their understanding of international and comparative law, including the law pertaining to international business transactions.
- ◇ **Reason for proposed name change.** Current students who have earned their JD degrees from U.S. institutions are required to focus their Master of Laws studies in courses relating to international and comparative law. However, Master of Laws students who are foreign-trained lawyers are not similarly restricted. Most foreign-trained lawyers use the Iowa Master of Laws program as an opportunity for a basic introduction to U.S. law. The study of domestic law provides a comparative perspective for foreign-trained lawyers, but few wish to pursue an in-depth scholarly comparative analysis in either their course selection or research topics. Furthermore, some applicants want to take advantage of other research strengths of the College, including business and innovation law.

The proposed change will allow the College to market the Master of Laws program to the broadest range of students without discouraging students by the restrictiveness of the current title. To maintain the strength of the program, the Program Review Committee recommended using the marketing and admissions processes to advise students toward areas of strength and depth within the curriculum, including international and comparative law, American legal practice, American legal theory, and international business systems. The proposed name change will meet the needs of foreign-trained lawyers regardless of their interest in a more academic research plan or in qualifying to practice law in the U.S. In most circumstances, the College will continue to require students with a U.S. JD degree to focus on international and comparative law.

- ◇ **Comparable name at other institutions.** Approximately 110 law schools accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) offer a Master of Laws program; 35 offer degrees with a general designation. “General Master of Laws” represents one of the three largest categories of the nearly 50 categories of Master of Laws degrees offered by ABA-accredited law schools.

- ◇ Consistency with accreditation requirements. The proposed name change anticipates the proposed changes under consideration by the American Bar Association which would require law schools to certify that students who wish to take a state bar exam have earned a “Master of Laws degree for the Practice of Law in the United States.” The proposed name change will focus on requiring foundational courses in U.S. law, legal writing, research and analysis, and professional development. The general designation of the proposed name change will allow the College to meet the needs of foreign-trained lawyers by removing the barrier of a narrow designation. Focus on international law, comparative law, practical skills or other topics can be noted as a specialization for individual students.

ABA accrediting standard #308 states that “a law school may not establish a degree program other than its J.D. program without obtaining the Accreditation Council’s prior acquiescence. A law school may not establish a degree program in addition to its J.D. program unless the school is fully approved. The additional degree program may not detract from a law school’s ability to maintain a J.D. program that meets the requirements of the standards.” The current program serves Master of Laws students primarily in classes already offered in the curriculum; the proposed name change will not result in a change. The Master of Laws program was found to be compliant in the last accreditation cycle.
- ◇ Effect on program configuration. The proposed name change will have no impact on the number of hours required for the degree. The College is undertaking changes to the configuration of the program to meet the new requirements of different state bar exams. This includes requiring Master of Laws students interested in U.S. legal practice to take core courses and professional responsibility offered by the College. Beginning in Summer 2012, the College will provide an extended orientation for all Master of Laws students and foreign visitors. The College is also piloting a new writing, research, and analysis course tailored to foreign-trained lawyers entering the Master of Laws program.
- ◇ Effect on students. Current students will not be affected by the name change because a specialization in international and comparative law will continue to be noted as part of their graduation credential.
- ◇ Effect on resources. The changes in program configuration noted above, although not necessitated by the proposed name change, will add a nominal instructional cost for the writing, research, and analysis course. There are no associated costs for facilities, promotional materials, or infrastructure.
- ◇ Date of implementation. The proposed name change will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the University’s General Catalog.