

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA:
MASTER OF STUDIES IN LAW

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to establish a new Master of Studies in Law (MSL) Program in the College of Law.

Executive Summary: The proposed program will provide training in the legal system from a non-practitioner standpoint. 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 intended to educate students and professionals who do not wish to practice law but who need to recognize and respond effectively to legal issues in their work. The proposed curriculum combines traditional cornerstone courses designed to teach legal reasoning and methods with more advanced cross-disciplinary courses. This approach will provide the foundation necessary to address complex regulations and future challenges. The College of Law has developed a program that is flexible and accessible. The program will be flexible in content and structure to accommodate students’ needs.
 - ⇒ Students may choose to build their own customized course of study or to pursue courses within a designated specialty track. Some of the specialty tracks will include a Business and Innovation Track and a Law and Public Policy Track. Other specialty tracks may be approved by the faculty in the future.
 - ⇒ The program may be completed in as little as one year of full-time study or in not more than four years of part-time study.
 - ⇒ The program will be more accessible and affordable than the JD program. Because it is not a professional program, admission standards do not have to be as rigorous; the tuition will be substantially less than for the JD program.

- ◇ **Academic objectives.** Master’s program in the study of law are designed to provide an introduction to the legal system as a whole and a basic understanding of particular areas of law. MSL students will study alongside JD students in existing courses and will have access to all of the same high-quality instruction, programs, and support services. The program requirements include 30 semester credit hours of study. Approximately, nine credit hours will include introductory first-year courses on legal method and the common law, and at least two credits will be a seminar or independent study with a writing component. Students will choose the remainder of their courses, including up to nine credit hours of interdisciplinary courses from other colleges.

- ◇ Need for proposed program. Every workplace presents legal issues. The proposed program would provide professionals with an overview of the legal system as a whole, and an introduction to some of the legal issues likely to be encountered in particular fields. The proposed program would extend the benefits of a legal education to nontraditional students while maximizing the use of existing resources in the College of Law.
- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. The proposed program serves the strategic plan goals of the College of Law. The College's Strategic Plan for 2013-2017 includes the goal to "enrich the College of Law's educational culture and strengthen the College's future by enhancing our efforts to recruit three-year JD students while diversifying the degree programs we offer and the student populations we teach." The Plan also requires the College to "identify opportunities and implement practices for departmental collaboration to improve effectiveness and build efficiencies." The proposed program serves both goals. For the past few years, there has been a downward national trend in the number of students applying for the JD program. For some potential students, a sluggish economy has created the perception that a three-year JD program might not be a good investment. Therefore, the proposed program would allow the College of Law to maximize the use of existing resources by opening its doors to people who do not wish to practice law but who would nevertheless value a one-year course of legal education.

The proposed program also serves the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to "provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality," as well as Goal #8, which states that "Iowa's public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive."

- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at SUI. The proposed program interacts with and supports other program on campus. Student will be permitted and encouraged to take courses related to their MSL studies in other colleges on campus. They will also be encouraged to attend programming and events in other colleges to enhance their curricular learning. The professional experiences and legal training of MSL students will make them valuable contributors in classrooms across the university.
- ◇ Unique features. The College of Law is consistently ranked in the top 30 law schools in the country by *U.S. News and World Report*; the College has a significant record of job placement for its graduates. The proposed program will enable the College to provide a top-notch education and a valuable employment credential for people from a variety of backgrounds. The College of Law is well-suited to offer this program by virtue of its location at a large, public research university. The College's proximity to and close relationships with other college will provide an interdisciplinary approach to legal education that is difficult to obtain at smaller colleges, yet necessary for preparing professionals for future challenges. A student may take up to nine credit hours of non-law classes in related disciplines, such as accounting, statistics, finance, public health, engineering, social sciences, or other disciplines. Students in the Business and Innovation Track may choose to take Patent and Trademark courses in the College of Law, a finance course in the Tippie College of Business, and a computer science course in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Students in the Law and Public Policy Track may choose to take Criminal Law and Human Rights courses in the College of Law and History, Psychology, or Sociology courses in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

- ◇ Duplication. The Drake University Law School offers a similar program (called a Master of Jurisprudence or MJ). The University of Iowa's proposed program is broader and more interdisciplinary. The Drake curriculum for the MJ in Individualized Legal Studies requires students to complete 24 credit hours of courses drawn from the Law School curriculum. The proposed program requires 30 credit hours but allows students to take nearly one-third of those hours in cross-disciplinary courses in other colleges. Drake's MJ curriculum in Intellectual Property Law focuses on intellectual property law whereas the proposed program Business and Innovation Track highlights not only intellectual property law but also business and entrepreneurship. The College of Law's interdisciplinary curriculum is supported by its location at a large, public, research university. The proposed program will provide access to courses, lectures, programming, and other events across campus that will enrich the student experience.

- ◇ Student demand. The College has received inquiries about the possibility of being able to pursue an abbreviated course of study within the law school. Some students seeking this degree may have completed a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor Science degree and are looking to better position themselves in the job market. Other students are on an established career path but seek to increase their skill set and enhance mobility and promotion opportunities.

The proposed program may generate interest among a variety of potential students, including: undergraduates at the three Regent universities as well as at private colleges in Iowa and other states; graduate students at the University of Iowa and other schools; entry- and mid-level professionals in various fields; professionals seeking to change their field or career path; and life-long learners seeking to understand the legal system.

The customized track option has great potential to generate student interest. It would allow students the flexibility to design a curriculum that fits their needs while guaranteeing that the courses they choose will be taught by top-notch faculty at an established and reputable institution.

The specialized MSL tracks reflect particular strengths of the College Of Law for which there is also likely to be demand. The Business and Innovation Track would provide an invaluable education to those expecting to enter or already working in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) or business fields. The proposed program would offer these professionals a modicum of legal knowledge regarding patenting of technology, products, and other innovations; trademark branding and marketing strategies; and business formation and management. In as little as one year, students should be able to identify legal issues regarding intellectual property and business, avoid infringement liability, and know when to seek professional legal advice.

The Law and Public Policy Track will serve students who are interested in criminal justice, government, sociology, race issues, constitutional law, international law, and related fields. Currently, nearly 15% of the JD students work in government and public interest organizations after graduation, and many others work in private firms practicing criminal law, immigration law, and other types of public law. There will also likely be a substantial number of non-JD students who would seek an introduction to law and public policy.

The College Of Law will also explore the development of other specialized tracks in the future. Preliminary discussions have indicated that a Human Resources Track and a Law and Liberal Arts Track might be good options to pursue.

- ◇ Workforce need/demand. The customized program is expected to appeal to a wide variety of professionals. Anecdotal evidence indicates that administrators in primary or secondary education, human resources specialists, and small business owners are some of the target student groups for the proposed program. The Business and Innovation Track will attract students working in STEM-related fields. According to the *Des Moines Register*, 87,000 degreed lowans worked in STEM-related fields as of 2012, and there were another 10,000 vacant STEM jobs ready to be filled in the state during that same time period.¹ That number is expected to rise as the states grows the economy through STEM education and awareness. The Business and Innovation Track would be advantageous to those people working in STEM or business fields. The Law and Public Policy Track would serve a different part of the workforce. Those working or seeking to work in government, law enforcement, journalism, or communications are the most obvious candidates; however, anyone wishing to understand law and society would potentially be interested.
- ◇ Resources. The proposed program will be housed in the Boyd Law Building. Existing faculty, staff, classroom space, library resources, and equipment can accommodate and support the expected enrollment. No additional resources will be necessary to implement the proposed program initially. As the program grows, the Faculty Oversight Committee will recommend any necessary changes to tracks, courses, programming, and resources.
- ◇ Cost. The College is not expected to incur additional costs as a result of the proposed program. Existing resources can support the proposed program. As the program grows, the Faculty Oversight Committee will recommend necessary additional resources.
- ◇ Projected enrollment. Enrollment is expected to increase over time, with a minimum number of five students during the first year and growing to a minimum of 25 students during the seventh year.
- ◇ Admissions. Prospective students will apply for admission through the Law School Admissions Office. The process will require a short statement describing the applicant's reasons for pursuing the program; a current resume; official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended; an official, ACT, SAT, GRE, GMAT, or LSAT test score; and two letters of recommendation. International students whose first language is not English must also demonstrate English language proficiency by obtaining a satisfactory score on the TOEFL exam.

The College will also explore the feasibility of a 3+1 Admissions Program which would admit qualified undergraduates after three full years of work. For a student whose undergraduate college has agreed to participate in the 3+1 Admissions Program, completion of MSL coursework would complete the requirements for the Bachelor's degree as well as for the MSL degree.

¹ "22% of lowans with bachelor's degrees employed in STEM fields." *Des Moines Register*, July 10, 2014.

- ◇ Tuition. Tuition will be significantly lower than for other programs offered by the College of Law because the proposed program is not a professional degree. It is more comparable to other non-professional Master's program at the university such as the Master of Public Health and the Master of Health Administration. Tuition for MSL students enrolling in 2015 will be \$700 per credit hour for residents and \$1,300 per credit hour for nonresidents; tuition will be evaluated on an annual basis.
- ◇ Evaluation plan. The Dean will administrative oversight of the proposed program. Faculty oversight will take two forms: (1) The Dean will appoint a faculty member to serve as the MSL Program Director. (2) The Dean will form a committee, called the MSL Faculty Oversight Committee, comprised of faculty members who teach required core courses as well as faculty members who teach courses in the specialty tracks. The Program Director will serve as the primary point person for the proposed program and will chair the MSL Faculty Oversight Committee. The Committee will serve recruiting, admissions, curriculum, advising, and resource allocation functions in consultation with the Dean, Associate Deans, Admissions Committee, Curriculum Committee, and other relevant faculty and staff members. The Committee will assess the program at least once annually and recommend changes to the Dean or to the faculty as appropriate.
- ◇ 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 August 2015.