

BACHELOR'S OF LIBERAL STUDIES BUSINESS PLAN

I. Executive Summary

To serve the educational needs of the students at UM-St. Louis and provide educated workers for the St. Louis region, the Colleges of Arts and Science, Business, and Fine Arts and Communication collaborated on a new undergraduate degree program entitled Bachelor of Liberal Studies. This program will allow students to obtain a solid education that incorporates greater flexibility in the choice of “major” (two “minors” and/or certificates) than current BA and BS programs while providing more structure than the Bachelor of General Studies.

Because minors and certificates require upper-division coursework, the additional demand for such courses created by the BLS will make it possible to offer them more frequently and at off-campus locations, e.g., South County Education Center. Currently advanced courses lack adequate student demand to support a wide variety of traditional majors at all our sites.

The BLS program will serve both the educational needs of students and the workforce requirements of the greater St. Louis region. The last census revealed that only 35% of the St. Louis region’s population had an undergraduate degree or higher. The data suggest that there is a population of at least 191,823 who have taken some college courses and may be interested and able to continue working toward a degree. The greater flexibility built into the BLS degree, in contrast to the specialization present in traditional BA and BS degrees, will produce graduates better able to adapt to the changing demands of a knowledge-based economy.

Because the BLS rests on the combination of existing minors and certificates, it will be able to produce new graduates at minimal cost. With current faculty and courses, the new program will be able to serve about 70 additional students at little or no additional cost.

Promotion and marketing plans include direct advertising using a brochure and development of an informative and multi-linked web site that describes the program. Particular attention will be given to students enrolled at off-campus sites.

II. Organization structure

Although the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business, and Fine Arts and Communication worked together to develop the proposal for the BLS, the program will be housed in Arts and Sciences because of the existing student support services available. The BLS program rests on existing academic minors and certificates offered and under the control of the collaborating units. Acting on recommendations from academic departments and areas, the faculty of each College determine the requirements of individual minors and certificates and inform advisors in the other units and the University Advising Office.

Thus the existing governance system accommodates this new degree while leaving revisions to the contributing minors and certificates in the hands of the relevant faculty.

Students will identify the minors and/or certificates they are completing for the degree at the time they declare a “major.” The degree requirements will be integrated into the degree auditing and reporting system.

III. Product and Services

A. Product and service description

The cooperating units in the proposed BLS have offered minors and certificates for many years. The demands of major requirements, however, have limited student participation. By making minors and certificates central to completing a degree, more students will elect and complete them—if only as a way to delay committing to a single discipline.

The primary attraction of the BLS is the opportunity it offers students to obtain a significant amount of knowledge and methodology from two disciplines. The extensive number of possible combinations allows for considerable flexibility while simultaneously preserving clear structure in the degree program. In line with all liberal arts degrees (whatever the name given to the baccalaureate), the objective is to educate students for successful lives and careers rather than training them for specific jobs. Indeed it is precisely the flexibility and adaptability of educated workers that permeate the new economy.

Indeed it is college graduates in general, not graduates in a particular area, that lie behind the figures in “A Blueprint for Prosperity and Jobs” prepared for The Missouri Department of Economic Development (January 2003).¹

Missouri ranked 33rd with respect to the percentage of the population that had graduated from college in 2000 (MQ 2002). Only 21.6 percent of the population possessed a post-secondary degree in 2000 (U.S. Census).

Missouri falls behind the national average in college enrollment of both traditional and nontraditional students. In Missouri, 36 percent of high school students enrolled in college in any state in 1998, and 30 percent of those aged 18 to 24 were enrolled in college. Contrast these figures with the average for the top five states (Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, and North Dakota), where 54 percent of high school students go on to college and 42 percent of 18 to 24 year olds are enrolled (MCBHE 2002).

¹ <http://www.ded.mo.gov/pdfs/blueprintnew.pdf>

B. Competitive Comparison

The BLS offers a unique option for students at UMSL and is unlikely to compete seriously with the campus' existing programs. The proposed degree provides breadth absent from BA and BS degree requirements and differs from the Bachelor of General Studies in its clearly defined structure.

Harris-Stowe State College offers a B.S. in Professional Interdisciplinary Studies in which students must take courses from at least two but not more than three areas of the following areas: Business, Criminal Justice, Education, Urban Specializations, Humanities/Fine Arts, and Mathematics/Science/Technology. The program is thus simultaneously less focused (two or three areas) and more general (five areas rather than some two dozen minors and certificates available at UMSL).

Although a variety of interdisciplinary degree programs are available at seven other public institutions in the state, students who attend UMSL are very unlikely to transfer to any of them in order to complete such a program because our students are largely local and place-bound.

IV. Market Analysis

A. Market Needs

The Bureau of Labor Statistics confirms that a college degree is almost mandatory for obtaining a high-paying job. Forty-nine of the top 50 highest paying occupations require this preparation.² The National Governors' Association also emphasizes the centrality of higher education. "Information, technology, communications, and intellectual capital, rather than energy and raw materials, power today's businesses. The driving forces of the new economy are ideas, knowledge, services, and higher-order skills."³

Not just knowledge, but adaptability and flexibility are essential for obtaining and retaining desirable positions. This is stated explicitly in "A Blueprint for Prosperity and Jobs," which emphasizes the importance for Missouri of a skilled labor pool that is "flexible, creative, adaptable, and open to innovation."

Similarly, In *Building Skills for the New Economy: A Policymaker's Handbook*⁴, Robert D. Atkinson writes that "skills and adaptability have become the new job security" as knowledge-based jobs have grown in number and assumed a larger role in the economy. "Managerial and professional jobs have increased from 22 percent of all jobs in 1979 to

² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Outlook Handbook. www.bls.gov

³ National Governors' Association Online. http://www.nga.org/center/topics/1,1188,D_591,00.html

⁴ This paper is based on a presentation given to the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices forum on Workforce Development, Dearborn, Mich., December 1, 2000. http://www.ndol.org/documents/build_skills2.pdf

36 percent in 1999. And jobs requiring an associate degree or above are expected to increase from 21.8 percent in the late 1990s to 23.3 percent by 2006.”

The proposed program will provide the largely place-bound students at UM-St. Louis with a degree option that builds in intellectual flexibility and prepares the recipient for adaptability a changing economy. Thus it corresponds directly to the projected needs of employees in coming years. In addition, the program lends itself to non-traditional forms of delivery that hold the promise of enabling more non-traditional learners to obtain a baccalaureate degree, for example, at the South County Center operated by SLCC-Merrimac. Thus the program helps to address the identified need for more college graduates in the State of Missouri.

B. Target Market Segment

With the exception of secondary school teaching, graduates with a BLS will be employable in the wide range of public and private sector occupations historically open to liberal arts majors. Having obtained an education rather than training, they will leave with analytical skills useful in many managerial and executive positions. The proposal describes feedback from consultants confirming the marketability of the BLS.

V. Promotion and Marketing Strategy

In order to attract new students, we plan to promote the program:

- The Admissions Office will distribute information about the BLS as part of its ongoing recruitment visits to both high schools and community colleges.
- UM-St. Louis Outreach staff housed in the community colleges will encourage potential “Undecided” transfer students to consider the BLS.
- Information will be made available at on-campus recruiting events, e.g., UMSL Day.
- Information will be placed in the *Bulletin*
- An attractive website will be designed to describe the program. The site will be linked to websites of the participating colleges and departments and thus should attract numerous viewers who are potential students.

We also view the BLS as a potential retention tool, designed to give existing students more options so that they can graduate, despite changing majors or having interests in more than one field. The most vulnerable students are those who declare their major as “Undecided.” The last IPEDS report listed 683 undecided undergraduates in Arts and Sciences, and they will all receive information about the new program. Advisors in the College of Arts and Sciences will also contact UM-St. Louis “Stop Outs,” students in good academic standing who do not re-enroll, to determine if a more flexible degree program will entice them to return to the university.

VI. Financial Plan

A. Important Assumptions

Income from the proposed new degree rests on the number of new students that are expected to enroll in the program. Detailed enrollment projections are included in the formal degree proposal. Within five years, we expect that the new degree program will reach a steady-state enrollment of 30 full-time and 39 part-time students.

B. Break-even analysis.

Because this degree program is comprised of minors and certificates that are already available, we expect that “new” revenue from student tuition/fees will level off at about \$205,000 per year. By comparison, new program expenses will level off at about \$30,000 per year, should it be necessary to offer seven additional capstone courses (which could accommodate 72 students). The break-even number is 0; if no students were to enroll, there would be no additional expenses incurred. Indeed, 13 FTE students would pay for the cost of seven additional capstone courses.

C. Projected Balance Sheet

We project that the program will show an excess of income over expenditure from the first year of operation.