

Rationale for University of Wisconsin-Extension Mission Change

Purpose and Executive Summary

The higher education landscape in Wisconsin and across the U.S. is changing very quickly, and public higher education is under increasing pressure to adjust to new competitors, new technologies, and new needs while reducing costs. These internal challenges and external pressures require new delivery models and new approaches to address unmet needs for quality education and credentials in the state and beyond.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension is proposing to further extend the reach and impact of the UW by broadening its role of extending the resources of the UW in Wisconsin and beyond. UW-Extension will do so by partnering with UW campuses to offer competency-based credentials, including credit-bearing certificates and associate, baccalaureate and master's degrees in business (including labor relations), technology, healthcare, and education. The audience, mission, structure, and teaching methods will be markedly different from other UW institutions.

UW-Extension degrees will not duplicate programs available throughout the UW-System. The focus will be to offer credentials for adult learners who are interested in professionally oriented degrees and certificates, offered through alternative delivery methods. Degrees and certificates will be competency based. UW-Extension will collaborate with UW campuses to offer programs, and it will offer additional credentials only if partnerships are not feasible.

- Degrees and certificates will be based on clear market research and evidence of needs in the labor market in existing and emerging fields.
- Degrees and certificates will be developed with input from employers, professional associations, and others to ensure high degrees of relevance and immediacy of knowledge/skills application.
- Degrees and certificates will be cross-disciplinary and professionally oriented, and will focus on the direct application of knowledge and skills learned.
- Degrees and certificates will be targeted to adult students interested in career advancement, career change, and the attainment of valuable professional development.
- Degrees and certificates will be offered on a 12-month calendar basis. Students will be able to begin a program any month of the year, take breaks as needed, and work at their own pace.
- Academic development and approval processes will be built on a 12-month calendar:
 - Lean development processes will be used so programs can be built efficiently.
 - Shared governance and academic approval steps will use just-in-time principles.
 - Because UW-Extension programs will focus on adult and nontraditional students, many of whom have some college credits, UW-Extension will perform rapid transcript reviews and respond to students about admissions decisions in timelines responsive to their needs (for example, within 48 hours of application).
 - Programs will be evaluated annually for quality, process, and market viability. Corrections will be made as needed, and when market viability changes, programs will be closed quickly, with accommodations made to enable enrolled students to finish their degrees.
- The competency-based programs will primarily be direct assessment programs in the Flexible Option model, blended with other modular and self-paced formats only in instances where fully direct assessment is not feasible. Programs will be offered primarily online, and through blended formats when fully online is not feasible (clinical and practicum assessments, etc.).

Background and Details

American higher education is under tremendous pressures to evolve and adjust to rapidly changing social, economic, and workforce needs. Jobs that were once a mainstay of the Wisconsin and U.S. economy have disappeared, and new jobs have emerged in fields that previously did not exist. At a time when people need to re-tool and adapt on a continuous basis, higher education is being called on to provide new options for learning. These options must be affordable, flexible, and accessible to a much larger number of individuals than current models allow.¹

The University of Wisconsin is making adjustments to adapt to these broad challenges. The UW Flexible Option is one example of positive adaptation, as are the online and collaborative degree programs offered across the UW System. However, the UW's ability to respond nimbly to market and student demands is encumbered by processes and practices designed for traditional educational structures and programs.

As Table 1 shows, within the 6 state region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin), the University of Wisconsin has only 7% of the bachelor's degree market and 3% of the master's degree market among institutions that offer those degrees both by distance education and face-to-face. The market share numbers are even more concerning if one looks at institutions that offer online business and information technology degrees, where UW holds a mere 3% market share for bachelor's degrees. This despite the fact that the occupations requiring a bachelor's degree that are projected to grow the most in the next decade are primarily in business and IT (see Table 2). For-profit institutions, including American Inter-Continental University, Ashford University, and Kaplan University, hold a large share of this market. *Currently, about 17,000 Wisconsin residents are enrolled in for-profit institutions.* In fact, in the same 6-state region (IL, IN, IA, MI, MN, and WI), for-profit providers claim 58% of the market for online general business bachelor's degrees and 54% for online general business master's degrees compared to the UW's 1% and 1.5% respectively. These institutions dominate the market because the UW has not developed a market-driven program array in the formats desired by adult and nontraditional students. The UW does not have processes and practices to develop and begin new programs in a responsive timeline, nor are institutions structured to provide quality education on customer-focused platforms that adult students expect and need in the era of Amazon and Apple.

The largest market for higher education are "nontraditional" "degree completers" – adults 25 years and older, with some college and no degree, working part or full time, often with family. Recent census data indicate that 21% (or over 800,000 adults) of Wisconsin citizens fit this description.²

A 2014 study by the higher education research firm Eduventures³ found that the national nontraditional degree-completer market is 60 million. However, only 6 million or 10% are currently enrolled in undergraduate programs. To attract more degree-completers, Eduventures identified the following criteria:

- 60% of degree completers are driven by career advancement
- 70% are focused on lower tuition and fees
- 51% identified self-paced completion as very important
- 47% want and need credit for life/work experience through an exam
- 44% want accelerated completion options
- 43% want options to test out of courses for faster completion

Adult learners need multiple opportunities to earn degrees, including educational models that differ greatly from traditional college programs. New models require an even greater level of flexibility than the growing array of UW programs currently offered, and they need to be created quickly to meet rapidly emerging needs, and modified quickly (or disassembled altogether) when needs change.

To enable the UW to respond to the broad changes facing our state and nation, UW-Extension's proposal is to add to the UW's repertoire of educational opportunities through new educational models offered by and through UW-Extension. UW-Extension leverages its own existing capacities and those across the UW through a redefined UW-Extension mission.

The UW-Extension degrees will be designed explicitly to complement, rather than compete with, existing programs on the UW campuses. New degrees and certificates will be designed to expand the market of students drawn to the UWs. The real competition for this market of students comes from out-of-state for-profit providers and also some not-for-profit institutions that are increasingly targeting Wisconsin students. Again, about 17,000 Wisconsin residents are currently enrolled in for-profit institutions. While some of these institutions are accredited and have a vital role to play in higher education, others are less credible and take advantage of students and financial aid systems without providing a viable set of skills or credentials. In many cases, these schools are more expensive than the UW.

Maintaining Quality Standards

UW-Extension has tenured and tenure-track faculty in the divisions of Cooperative Extension and Continuing Education, Outreach and E-Learning. About one-third of UW-Extension's 415 faculty members have dual appointments with the other UW campuses; the tenure homes for the rest are exclusively in Extension. The structure and role of UW-Extension faculty is one of many examples of the interconnectedness of Extension across the entire UW System.

To offer degrees, UW-Extension will proceed through the same processes as any degree-granting institutions in the UW System; i.e., degrees will first have to be approved by faculty governance, then approved at the UW System level, then by the UW Board of Regents, and finally by the Higher Learning Commission. In the case of direct assessment competency-based programs, those programs will also have to be approved at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Education. This final approval is an additional step in the degree approval process beyond that of nearly all other UW degrees.

To ensure content relevance in fast-moving fields, UW-Extension will engage faculty from across the UW System (with approval from campus departments and deans) and employers to work together to develop curricula that are robust and relevant, targeted, current, and of high quality. Degrees will be reviewed annually, with formal reviews conducted every 5 years. To assure ongoing content expertise and oversight, one idea could be the creation of "virtual departments" which join UW-Extension faculty and content experts from across the UW System. *Maintaining the high quality standards of a UW degree is to all of our benefit; it is our competitive advantage in this marketplace.*

In summary, UW-Extension proposes to seek a change of mission to offer competency-based degrees to adult and nontraditional students. UW-Extension will work with campuses whenever possible to jointly develop programs. Degrees and certificates will be delivered using alternative methods tailored to optimize learning of adult students. Shared governance and approval processes will be created based on a 12-month calendar and using lean principles and practices.

Table 1
2012 & 2013 Degrees Conferred among those Mid-West Higher Ed Institutions Offering
Bachelors or Masters Programs both through Distance Education and Face-to-Face

Institution Sector	Bachelor's Degrees Conferred in 2012 & 2013				Master's Degrees Conferred in 2012 & 2013			
	Bachs Conferred in 2012	Bachs Conferred in 2013	Total Bachs Conferred	% by Sector	Masters Conferred in 2012	Masters Conferred in 2013	Total Masters Conferred	% by Sector
Private for-profit, 4-year or above	27,447	32,856	60,303	28%	25,077	26,175	51,252	37%
Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above	22,553	27,531	50,084	23%	19,487	23,305	42,792	30%
Public, 4-year or above	41,750	50,433	92,183	43%	20,543	21,951	42,494	30%
UW 4 Year institution	4,921	9,174	14,095	7%	1,134	2,647	3,781	3%
Total	96,671	119,994	216,665	100%	66,241	74,078	140,319	100%

Table Notes:

1. Population of Institutions - Any institution in WI, MN, IA, IL, MI or IN that offers either a bachelor's degree or a master's degree by means of on-campus ("brick and mortar") or distance ed delivery within any 2-digit CIP Code
2. Data on degrees conferred counts both on-campus program degrees conferred and distance ed program degrees conferred; for example, if an institution has both an on-campus bachelor's in business administration and an online program, then graduates from both modalities are included in the table's counts
3. 2012 degrees conferred count any degrees conferred in the following timeframe: July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012
4. 2013 degrees conferred count any degrees conferred in the following timeframe: July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013
5. Data in this table includes all CIP codes (compiled at the level of 2-digit CIP Codes)
6. Source of Data: NCES IPEDS, 2013 and 2012 datasets
7. Project File Path: My Documents:\Degree Granting Status Opportunities CEOEL\Upper Mid West All CIPs

Table 2
Growth in Occupations that Require Bachelor's Degree, 2012 to 2022

Rank	Description	2012 Jobs	2022 Jobs	Expected Increase*	Ave. Hourly	Regional Completions
1	Registered Nurses (Bachelor's and Associates)	55,348	64,618	9,270	\$30.20	4,478
2	General and Operations Managers	30,672	36,132	5,460	\$41.78	6,017
3	Software Developers, Applications	9,794	12,767	2,973	\$36.78	638
4	Accountants and Auditors	20,129	22,890	2,761	\$27.91	2,300
5	Computer Systems Analysts	9,487	12,099	2,612	\$34.60	1,360
6	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	7,506	9,839	2,333	\$25.08	1,603
7	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	26,440	28,394	1,954	\$27.06	2,156
8	Management Analysts	11,125	12,956	1,831	\$32.23	5,689
9	Software Developers, Systems Software	2,965	4,505	1,540	\$40.51	711
10	Computer and Information Systems Managers	5,884	7,137	1,253	\$49.06	2,229

Endnotes

¹ Employment projections call for 60% of the population needing post-secondary degrees by the year 2025. With only 40% of America (and Wisconsin) currently possessing post-secondary degrees, approximately 60 million more people in the U.S. will need to receive post-secondary degrees in the next 10 years (approximately 1.2 million in Wisconsin alone). Presently, fewer than 18 million U.S. citizens (less than 400,000 in Wisconsin) are enrolled in any form of higher education, and a little more than half of them will graduate with a degree within 6 years. We simply are not on the right track to graduate that many more people with the capacity of the existing higher education enterprise.

² http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_5YR_S1501&prodType=table

³ Closing the Degree Completion Gap: Challenges and Opportunities, Eduventures, May 2014.