

## MEMORANDUM

To: Valparaiso University Faculty and Staff

From: Mark Biermann, Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: Revised January 30, 2013, by Council of Deans  
Updated December 6, 2016  
Updated May 15, 2018

Subject: Academic Program Initiation Policy

### VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC PROGRAM INITIATION POLICY

#### I. GENERAL

This memo outlines basic procedures for academic program initiation at Valparaiso University. *Academic Program* here refers to courses of study or new combinations of courses, i.e., degrees and majors, not minors or certificates. Such programs must finally secure approval of the relevant governing bodies, as noted below. Note, in contrast, that the creation of new administrative units requires faculty consultation but is finally an administrative matter, e.g., the creation of a new college.

A proposal may originate from any level of the University but will be considered in accordance with the process described in this policy regardless of the originator.

#### II. PROCESS STEPS

##### A. PROSPECTUS

The first step in the academic program initiation process is the creation of a prospectus by the originator(s) to the appropriate academic dean for review. This prospectus will be the basis of a preliminary decision as to whether or not such a program would be both feasible and desirable for the University.

The prospectus will consist of no more than two pages including the following minimum content:

1. Basic description of the program
2. The rationale for the program
3. Budget estimate / List of high-level resources needed
4. Recruitment value / Estimate of demand for the program

The originator(s) will pass the prospectus to the appropriate Dean (or Deans) who will oversee the program if established.

B. ACADEMIC DEAN

The dean may deem the program described in the prospectus unfeasible and stop the process at this point. Should the Dean wish to continue the process, he or she will introduce the prospectus to the Provost's Council.

C. PROVOST'S COUNCIL

The Provost's Council will consider the prospectus to determine if additional resources may be needed. If not, the prospectus is returned to the originator(s) to advance to the implementation stage. If the Provost's Council determines that additional resources are likely to be needed, it then determines whether the program aligns with the university's mission and current priorities. If no, the process is stopped at this point. If yes, the originator(s) are asked to prepare a full proposal. Requesting a full proposal does not constitute approval of the proposed program.

D. PROPOSAL

The associate provost is responsible for facilitating the academic program initiation process and supporting the originator(s) in the development of their proposals.

In some cases, a market research firm may be of significant assistance in conducting market research for a prospective program. The Provost determines which proposals Valparaiso University sends to a research firm for study, the results of which are included in the proposal.

The associate provost will work with the originators to obtain the necessary university-level staff assistance/expertise as the proposal is prepared. Assembling a full proposal is time-consuming and requires significant research; hence, college and university-level staff assistance, particularly in areas such as institutional research, marketing, and finance, will normally be necessary for the originator(s). Those involved are likely to include

1. Assistant Dean of Online, Distance, Adult, and Continuing Education
2. Vice President of Enrollment Management
3. Financial Analyst
4. Chair of the Committee on Assessment
5. Academic Dean(s)
6. Assistant Vice-President Integrated Marketing and Communications
7. Dean of the Libraries

A proposal will consist of the following minimum contents and is submitted to the Provost's Council upon completion.

1. Executive Summary
  - a) No more than two pages
  - b) Summary of the proposal's principal points
2. Introduction
  - a) Purpose and scope of the proposal
  - b) Problem or need the proposal addresses
3. Background
  - a) Descriptions of similar programs elsewhere (successes and failures)
  - b) Discussion of any current or past related programs at VU
4. A detailed description of the program
  - a) Contribution to mission
  - b) Alignment with the strategic plan
  - c) Rationale
  - d) Curriculum (plan, not necessarily catalog copy)
  - e) Assessment plan (reviewed by the Committee on Assessment)
  - f) Accreditation issues (if applicable)
  - g) Sunset plan (typically related to the net contribution margin after four years.)
5. Business plan
  - a) Market analysis and strategy
  - b) Marketing plan, to include discussion of promotional strategies and costs
  - c) Financial analysis, to include costs, resources required, staffing and revenue projections, sustainability
  - d) Schedule for implementation
6. Conclusion
7. Attachments
  - a) Appendixes
  - b) Bibliography/references

E. PROVOST'S COUNCIL RESPONSE

The Provost's Council may, after reviewing the proposal, determine that it needs to be revised before further consideration. In this case, the associate provost will work with the originators to make these revisions. Otherwise, the Provost's Council will recommend whether or not to advance the proposal to the President's Council.

F. PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The President's Council will assess the university's ability to support the program financially during its initial years (e.g. first four years), while it reaches maturity. If the determination is no, the process stops here. If the determination is yes, the President's Council also determines if the proposal needs to be reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors. If not, the originators move to the implementation process. If yes, the proposal advances to the Board of Directors for a final decision on whether to move forward.

### III. IMPLEMENTATION

The actual implementation of a new program involves multiple steps that may happen concurrently.

- A. The critical path is through the governance system. The official curriculum proposal (i.e., catalog copy) needs to be drafted and reviewed by the appropriate college curriculum committee and then either the Graduate Educational Policy Committee or by the Educational Policy Committee and Faculty Senate. It takes at least three months to complete these steps in sequence, at which point the program can be included in either the undergraduate or graduate catalog as appropriate.
- B. The university controller needs to create and populate the relevant budget department.
- C. The Committee on Assessment needs to review and approve the program assessment plan and curriculum map.
- D. If the program involves online instruction, the originators need to work with the Assistant Dean for Online Programs to develop appropriate course delivery structures.
- E. Integrated Marketing and Communications needs to prepare a marketing plan.