

Budget and Long Range Planning Committee Comments on the “Proposal to Establish ‘University College’ dated 4/29/09

We appreciate the opportunity to review the proposal to establish “University College” and are happy that this proposal has been circulated and will be reviewed by a number of different governance groups on campus. This process reflects true open dialogue, which is important for our campus.

Given the current financial uncertainty about the campus budget and the current financial strain on all the existing colleges, it is particularly important that the proposed college clearly yield an increase in net benefits over the current CCDE configuration on campus. Therefore, the committee approached the evaluation of this proposal by first examining what additional benefits the conversion of CCDE into a college could provide the campus. While this document states “existing campus structures are insufficient to support full achievement” of the goals outlined, it is not clear to the committee why the proposed activities under a new college could not be carried out under the current structure. The committee believes that a college must be built around a core structure -- i.e. a group of disciplines that work together to form a particular school of thought or organized set of goals that orient its academic mission. The proposed University College, however, does not appear to have such a core academic structure – it has “no soul.” Furthermore, it appears that the implicit goal of converting CCDE into a college is to offer not only certificates, but also BA and MA degrees. While this may at first appear as a key strength of this proposal, it can also be perceived as a weakness because the proposed college will rely entirely on other colleges for its credibility.

The establishment of a college without a solid academic foundation, that appears to have mostly a service function, endangers the reputation of the university and the efforts that have gone into enhancing the perceptions of the UMB campus as a high quality teaching and research oriented university. As described at the end of the proposal under “Resources,” it seems clear that the primary purpose of this college is to serve as a revenue generator for the campus, which although possibly appropriate for CCDE, brings many issues to the forefront, including whether colleges should become market-driven service engines for the private sector.

The committee found itself limited in its ability to evaluate this proposal by the lack of a background rationale and absence of detail, particularly in reference to the articulated goals of the proposed college. Many of these goals appear to be more like a list of advantages that would result from the conversion of CCDE into a college, and therefore are difficult to assess without the knowledge of how they would rectify current disadvantages or limitations of the present structure. For example, the proposal does not address what presently limits CCDE in providing diversified academic offerings, responding quickly to workforce development needs, or promoting lifelong learning opportunities.

Furthermore, with regard to the laudable goal of increasing revenues, particularly in these financially troubling times, there is no discussion in the proposal of any marketing studies that support the estimates of revenues the college structure could raise as opposed to the current CCDE structure. In fact no details are given at all as to the source of the estimates provided in Appendix D. Given the lack of details, we can only assume that the primary source of additional

revenues from the CCDE structure is its ability to retain tuition from students in its proposed degree programs, which the other colleges cannot do.

In addition to these general concerns, the committee has several specific concerns that are not adequately addressed by the proposal:

- 1) The proposal states that regular faculty from other colleges will be utilized in the University College, yet there is no discussion of how these faculty will be selected, why they will be selected, or what role their home department and colleges will have in determining their release time. There is also little discussion of the problems that are often encountered with joint appointments in terms of evaluation and distribution of faculty effort.
- 2) There is very little discussion in the proposal of how curriculum will be developed and what quality oversight mechanisms will be in place, particularly for the degree programs described as “interdisciplinary or experimental” that would not fit in the traditional colleges. Because there is no apparent academic base to the college, the ability to evaluate faculty and programs is still unclear and the proposal does little to clarify this.
- 3) The proposal discusses the creation of professional science masters programs, yet it does not address the current efforts underway in various departments on campus to create these programs. How will the proposed college enhance these current efforts? Or will it compete with them?
- 4) The proposal does not address a concern that some departments have with the current CCDE programs and that is the problem of traditional college courses and programs “competing” with those offered by CCDE. We know that in some CCDE courses well over half the enrollments have consisted of students enrolled in our regular academic programs, thus taking away from enrollments in these traditional classes during the fall and spring semesters.
- 5) It is not clear to the committee why we are moving in the direction of differentiating traditional students from “working professional” students. Most, if not all, of our current colleges offer programs for working professionals. How will the creation of the University College affect these student populations and why cannot the structures of these colleges be enhanced to serve better both populations without creating a new structure that seems to be focused only on the latter?
- 6) The proposal does not sufficiently explain how the projected expansion of BA and MA programs (two new BA and four new MA over the next five years) can be carried out with a pre-dominantly adjunct faculty, largely drawn from other colleges.

In conclusion, the committee sees great value in the current offerings of CCDE and its ability to nimbly and flexibly address new programs, its ability to respond with certificates or particular course needs to match changing workforce development needs, and its money-raising capabilities for the campus. It is not clear why the current CCDE cannot continue to adequately address the needs of working professionals nor how a college structure will

facilitate this in a way the current structure does not. There is also not nearly enough detail provided in the proposal as to how a new college would develop new degrees in such a way as to ensure high quality offerings. It is also unclear how these new degrees would impact traditional degree programs on campus, both in terms of outside perceptions of the overall quality of university offerings, and in terms of competing for both student and faculty resources.