

Council of Member Institutions, ad hoc Subcommittee on Program Approval: Recommendations

This document:

1. Identifies a set of common principles which will guide discussions of proposals for new programming and/or for adding new institutional members.
2. Determines criteria and priorities for considering new programs, including definitions for market differentiation for niche programs vs. foundation programs.
3. Makes recommendations for steps for UCLC professional staff to take to improve the program submissions and approval process.
4. Makes a recommendation on allowing a new program some time to incubate and grow before considering another program in the same discipline and level. Makes a recommendation on a maximum number of programs in a given discipline and level.

Common Principles:

CMI discussions of new program proposals and new prospective member institutions shall be guided by the basic principles of an open, fair, honest, and transparent process. A sense of camaraderie and the “rule of reason” should underlie all interactions surrounding these deliberations. The CMI will always strive to look at what makes sense for Lake County and its citizens, for the viability of the overall programming at the University Center, and for meeting market demand and student needs (access and choice) within the resource parameters under which the University Center operates.

Criteria and Priorities for Consideration of New Programs:

Niche programs can provide opportunity to leverage unique strengths and meet a breadth of market demands. The CMI will consider criteria that differentiate a niche program and which enhance the overall principles of access and choice. These may include:

1. whether the University Center has identified it as a high need area through formal demand analyses
2. specialization within a larger discipline
3. capstone degree completion programs to meet a particular career or market need
4. delivery format not currently offered at the University Center (online, FTF, blended, video, etc.)
5. tuition differentials (which may address access issues)

As adopted by the CMI 10.18.07

6. delivery of the full program in Waukegan vs. Grayslake
7. program structure (accelerated courses, shortened terms, cohort model, etc.)

While considering these criteria, if another program already exists in that discipline and at that level, the member institution should work with University Center staff to develop a strategy to attempt to assess the size of the overall potential market before proposing a second program. Market differentiation is limited by the overall size of a given market and the number of programs in a particular discipline should be finite within the context of the market size. Guiding Principle: While more than one program in a discipline can find a niche in the overall market, the CMI should be aware of market saturation and may need to determine an absolute limit on the number of programs in a given discipline. Space and resource constraints at the University Center might also dictate a limit on programs housed at the Center.

Foundation programs are those which do not have a readily identifiable market based upon employer demands, but which are nonetheless in demand by students and which meet some overall good citizen criteria. Many liberal arts and sciences majors fall into this category and are considered foundation or core programs on our campuses. Our institutions know from experience that students in these majors often go on to graduate school, are hired in entry level professional positions by many employers, or are interested purely in studying that core discipline. These are often disciplines or majors that the College of Lake County graduates are looking to the UCLC to provide. The CMI recommends that the University Center conduct regular needs assessment research to keep current the Center's understanding of the market for both niche and foundation programs. Based on this updated research, regular RFPs could then be disseminated to the member institutions for their consideration.

In cases where a second program at the same level is proposed in a core discipline, the criteria outlined under consideration of "niche" programs would be utilized for program consideration.

Recommendations for Improving the Program Submission and Approval Process:

1. The University Center adopted a new program proposal form in August 2006, which was the culmination of much discussion and consideration by the CMI members. While the overall form is thorough, this committee recommends a few changes based upon past year's experience using the form. The form has boxed areas in each section which are reserved for CMI representatives' assessment of various criteria. These areas presume that the CMI reps will fill out the form and submit it before the meeting the following week. In practice, those boxes are left blank because it is difficult to make these assessments without further information and discussion. At the CMI meetings, the CMI reps vote on the proposal and therefore do not use the boxes at that time either. In addition, the committee believes that it would be very helpful to have an analysis of the proposal by the University Center staff when the CMI reps receive it one week prior to the CMI meeting. Therefore, this committee recommends that the University Center staff utilize the boxed areas in sections I – VII to submit analyses of their own of each of the categories. This would enhance the CMI reps' consideration of the proposal prior to it being presented and discussed at the meeting.

As adopted by the CMI 10.18.07

2. Once the criteria in this document are agreed upon, they should be put into a one page format that will be available at the CMI meetings for reference during discussions of program proposals.
3. The boxed portion of Section VIII (CMI Overall Recommendation) would remain the same and should be completed after the CMI vote is made and before the document with a CMI recommendation is moved forward to University Center Governing Board. At the same time, any relevant points from the CMI discussion can be incorporated into sections I-VII.

Recommendation on Program Incubation and Limits:

1. The committee notes that there have been a number of situations in the past few years when new programs have been approved in the same discipline and at the same level as another recently approved program. While the recommendations above for trying to determine the overall size of market prior to approval may help with this situation, it may not always be possible to make an accurate assessment in that regard. Presuming that a new program is meeting either an identified niche market need, or is filling a need for a core foundation program to be offered, there is some wisdom to the notion that a newly approved program ought to be allowed some time to incubate their program prior to having a clearly competitive program enter the market. Optimal start-up time varies by program, but often a two year time period is deemed to be minimal by enrollment specialists. The University Center has always been committed to choice as a concept, but given the resources that an institution expends in bringing forth a new program and trying to meet an identified market need, it is reasonable to consider a time period to allow the program to be in an incubator environment. The committee recommends that the CMI engage in a discussion of this concept and proposes that two years is a reasonable time period to allow a new program to incubate.
2. The committee recognizes that multiple niche programs can meet needs in a segmented market in a particular discipline. However, no market is infinite and therefore, the committee recommends that there be an absolute number above which we do not approve further programs in a given discipline and level. We are proposing that number be “three”.