WASHINGTON HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

July 2008

Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management, Columbia Basin College

Introduction

Columbia Basin College is seeking Higher Education Coordinating Board approval to offer a Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management. Following legislative authorization to expand the number of schools within the community and technical college system that could offer applied baccalaureate degrees, Columbia Basin College was selected as one of three additional colleges to develop a baccalaureate degree pathway for students who have completed a technical associate degree.

The proposed degree program would meet a need among regional and local employers for front-line supervisors and managers who have a mix of technical background and management skills. It also would allow those who have earned technical associate degrees and who want to advance in the workplace access to a baccalaureate degree program with a management focus. The program would begin in fall 2009, enrolling 20 FTE students in the first year of instruction and growing to 40 FTE students at full enrollment in the second year.

Relationship to Institutional Role and Mission and the Strategic Master Plan

The primary mission of Columbia Basin College is to "ensure that the people of Benton and Franklin Counties have access to educational programs providing sufficient knowledge for higher educational achievement, meaningful employment, basic skills development, cultural enrichment, and physical and emotional well being." Consistent with this mission, the BAS program would build on existing professional and technical associate degree programs and would prepare students to advance professionally and meet the needs of local employers.

Many elements of this program align well with the mission of Columbia Basin College. However, the college's new authority to grant bachelor's degrees, even when limited to a single program, represents a significant expansion of the institution's role and mission. Developing a degree program at a new level has implications for accreditation and potential impacts on students, faculty, and institutional resources. These implications and impacts are discussed later in this summary.

The program's goals are consistent with the goals of the *2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education*, which calls for educating more students to higher levels, creating a system of support for lifelong learning, and meeting the state's need for a highly skilled and educated workforce.

Diversity

To ensure diversity in the program, Columbia Basin College would recruit from its existing pool of students, who are more diverse than the surrounding community. The college also would expand existing communication and outreach diversity strategies and develop additional student activities programming and academic programming to support this effort.

In addition, program-specific initiatives will be used to attract and retain diverse students. The college will provide $20,000 per year in scholarship funds for students in the program. A majority of the scholarship awards in the AAS programs go to minority students, although the scholarships are available to those from all backgrounds.

Program Need

The proposal responds to needs expressed by students, employers, and community stakeholders. The HECB's *State and Regional Needs Assessment* indicates a regional demand for trained workers in management-related occupations. The new program would help meet that demand, a gap of up to 94 openings annually. Increasingly, employers are seeking individuals as front-line supervisors and managers who have a mix of technical and management skills. These positions are less likely to draw graduates from more "traditional" business programs, who are more likely to apply for positions as general and operations managers.

Local employers indicate the program would provide advancement opportunities for their current staff and would help them adapt to changes in the workplace requiring higher levels of training. This is consistent with the findings of the board's *State and Regional Needs Assessment*. These employers indicate they need workers with technical and industry-specific skills as well as the broader problem-solving, reasoning, and communication skills obtained in baccalaureate-level programs.

Student and alumni surveys were used to assess demand for the program. About 70 percent of Associate of Applied Science (AAS) students surveyed at the college in December 2007 indicated an interest in completing a bachelor's degree. About 55 percent of the graduates of workforce programs indicated they would enroll in the program if it became available. Employers said the program would benefit their workers and their businesses, noting that a bachelor's degree is often required for workers in technical positions who seek to be promoted. A conservative estimate is that 20 percent of Columbia Basin College's AAS graduates would be expected to apply to the program. In addition, the program would be expected to draw from Walla Walla Community College, Yakima Valley Community College, and Big Bend Community College.

Employer surveys and letters of support were used to assess community demand. Respondents said the program would benefit students and area employers by providing for career progression and wage growth. Employers also said the program would help advance and retain technical employees. Finally, they said the program would strengthen the AAS degree by raising the perceived value of the AAS.

Very few programs serving the Columbia Basin area enroll students directly from the AAS and provide a pathway to a bachelor's degree. Programs at Central Washington University and Eastern Washington University are the nearest public option for an AAS-BAS pathway. In addition to this distance barrier, those programs are more limited in terms of the AAS degrees they serve. Walla Walla University does offer an AAS-BS pathway in automotive technology and automotive management. A more traditional business degree program is available locally at Washington State University Tri-Cities; but while that program articulates well with transfer-oriented associate of arts degrees, it does not articulate well with the AAS degree. Students who complete an AAS would need to take at least an extra year of prerequisite coursework to enroll in the WSU business degree program.

Program Description

The Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management would provide a baccalaureate opportunity for graduates from a wide range of associate-level programs. Students who meet prerequisite coursework requirements and have completed an Associate of Applied Science-Transfer (AAS-T) or Associate of Applied Science (AAS) are eligible for admission to the BAS program. Columbia Basin College offers an option for those who have completed an apprenticeship to complete an AAS. These students would also be prepared to enter the BAS program. The college also anticipates that some students who have completed an Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) could benefit from the BAS degree option. These students would need to provide documentation of their technical skills through prior learning assessment, portfolio development, work experience, or specific coursework. The program would be developed based upon successful models of applied management programs implemented in Washington and other states. Graduates would possess a mix of industry-specific technical skills and a more general set of management and decision-making skills developed in the applied management program.

Students would be required to earn an appropriate associate degree as described above and meet specific program prerequisites, including computer proficiency, 20 credits of general education coursework (including college-level math and English composition), and an overall grade point average of 2.0 or higher. A selection committee that includes the lead program faculty, the BAS recruitment and retention specialist, student services representative, and diversity and outreach representative would review applications. If the number of qualified applicants exceeds space available, applicants would be ranked and admitted based upon their ranking.

Once enrolled in the program, students would be required to complete a total of 90 credits of 300- and 400-level coursework, to include: 35 additional credits of general education coursework, 45 required credits in management theory and practice, and 10 elective credits in management coursework. The general education curriculum would include 10 credits in communications, 10 credits in quantitative reasoning, 10 credits in humanities, 10 credits in social science, 5 credits of natural science, and 10 credits of general education electives, for a total of 55 general education credits. The proposal indicates that the program developers have reviewed curriculum standards of the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB); and may seek specialized accreditation after receiving NWCCU accreditation.

Graduates would be prepared for positions in a range of management and supervisory occupations in the region. They would demonstrate a mix of technical, interpersonal, and management knowledge that would enable them to assume leadership positions within their organizations and communities. As a result, graduates are expected to have greater opportunities for advancement.

The program would draw on new and existing faculty. The proposal indicates that two faculty positions would be added to staff the program. A Ph.D.-qualified faculty position would be added to lead the program. The program would also draw on current faculty in business and in the general education coursework. In the event a search for the faculty coordinator is not successful, the program has identified a current Ph.D.-qualified faculty person to fill that role. In the first year of instruction, the program would accommodate 20 FTE (35 headcount) students. The program would grow to approximately 40 FTE (70 headcount) students by the second year.

Students would be assessed based on clearly defined learning outcomes that are consistent with the overall program objectives and the needs expressed by area employers. Student assessment would occur through various tools at multiple points in time. These would include, but would not be limited to, performance on class projects and assessment of the capstone project.

The program would be evaluated based on stated objectives. Assessment would include indicators of student learning captured through student, employer, and alumni surveys as well as review of program statistics, retention and completion; student satisfaction, and student employment outcomes. The program evaluation also would include indicators related to faculty performance, appropriateness of the curriculum, and comparison to similar programs.

Program Costs

The program would enroll 20 FTE students in the first year of instruction, growing to 40 FTE students by the second year of instruction. The program would draw on existing faculty for much of the instruction; however, at least one new full-time faculty member would be hired to support the program. The program estimates the faculty-time equivalent to 1.0 full-time faculty during the planning year, growing to 3.0 FTE faculty in the second year of instruction. Administrative and clerical costs are based on 1.0 FTE in the planning year and 1.4 FTE in the second year of instruction.

The institution has reviewed a range of available student support services and staff in financial aid, advising, and placement services have begun planning for baccalaureate students to ensure that appropriate services are available to support the new program. CBC has committed to investment in computer lab support of $40,000 during the planning year, $5,000 in the first year of instruction, and $30,000 annually thereafter. The institution also would make investments in general program support, add a full-time recruiting and retention specialist dedicated to the BAS program, and make a significant investment in the college's library. To support the addition of the BAS program, the college would add $50,000 to the library budget in the planning year to build and maintain the collection. Investment in the library would total $22,400 in the first year of instruction and $50,000 annually thereafter.

Prior to the first year of instruction, the college would receive planning funds in FY 2009 of $226,000 which combined with $24,000 of local funds (reallocation) would provide $250,000 to cover start-up costs that would typically be reflected in the first year budget. As a result, the cost per FTE in the first year of instruction with an entering class of 20 FTE is only slightly higher than the cost at full enrollment at 40 FTE. Costs are $12,500 in the first year and $11,405 at full enrollment. The average cost of instruction for upper-division coursework in business at the regional baccalaureate institutions ranges from $7,195 to $10,301 per FTE (including indirect costs).

External Review

The program was reviewed by two external experts: David Lemak, Ph.D., Professor of Management in the College of Business at Washington State University, and Theodore Shore, Ph.D., Professor of Management at California State University, San Marcos.

Both reviewers provided detailed feedback on the proposals and expressed support for the proposals. Both reviewers were supportive of the value and need for a program that would allow AAS graduates to return to college to complete a bachelor's degree in a timely and cost-effective manner, then return to the workplace with enhanced opportunities for promotion and salary upgrades. Both mentioned the strong case made for student demand for the program, a compelling analysis of employer demand for program graduates, and a clear regional need for the program. Both reviews mentioned the strength of the proposed curriculum, the ability of CBC to provide program delivery through qualified faculty, and the campus capacity to support the program. Both said the program was likely to impact the existing AAS program positively by increasing graduation and completion rates (Dr. Lemak) and increasing enrollment in AAS programs (Dr. Shore).

Both reviewers also outlined several challenges and the need for clarification in some areas. Dr. Lemak provided several suggestions for fine-tuning the focus of several applied management classes (e.g., focusing AMGT 300 on organizational behavior and leadership). CBC was responsive to these suggestions and committed to modify the courses accordingly.

Dr. Shore asked how the degrees offered in the pilot BAS program compare with existing BA degrees and also requested information on earlier pilot programs and on how employers and universities might view the BAS degrees. Additional information has been included in the discussion of program evaluation to incorporate his thoughts on assessing student learning outcomes for the BAS program. CBC also committed to address some of Dr. Shore's more detailed concerns as it more fully develops the courses during the planning year. These include providing credit for work experience, creating internships for non-working students, determining which courses are to be taught solely via distance learning, and specifying the detailed content of the capstone course.

Finally, both reviewers questioned whether universities would likely view the BAS degree as sufficient for admission into an MBA program. Dr. Lemak believed that the BAS by itself probably would not be sufficient and that some additional coursework might be required, although "surely less" than for a completely new degree. Currently, the focus of the BAS program is clearly on providing an applied bachelor's degree opportunity for AAS graduates, rather than creating an MBA pathway. At this point, Columbia Basin College has not identified graduate programs that would accept graduates of the program, but it did express a need to look more closely at the issue so that students would have options for continued mobility beyond the bachelor's degree.

Staff Analysis

The proposed program would support the unique role and mission of the institution by providing a degree pathway for area students that would support their career and educational goals and also would support the needs of the local community for an appropriately prepared workforce.

The program proposal also advances the goals of the *2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education* by providing opportunities for students to earn degrees at higher levels that respond to the state's economic needs. The program would provide access to baccalaureate-level instruction for students who otherwise would be unlikely to obtain that level of training. In addition to the benefit for students and their families, the degree program would help the local community develop a workforce to support the region's economic development goals.

Consistent with the goals and limitations of applied baccalaureate degree programs offered by the community and technical colleges, the program would provide a career-oriented bachelor's degree pathway for students who have completed an applied associate degree and wish to progress in their field.

The proposed program includes an assessment approach with well-defined student-learning outcomes that would be assessed at multiple points in time through a variety of approaches. Assessment would be based on clear goals using objective data on student progress, along with feedback from students, alumni, and employers.

The program proposal responds to demonstrated student, employer, and community needs; and it is consistent with the *State and Regional Needs Assessment* and the institution's own assessment of need. In particular, the program responds to the changing demand among employers for more highly trained workers by providing a pathway to allow for career progression of incumbent workers.

The proposal identifies strategies to attract and retain a diverse student body – including outreach efforts, retention support, and a curriculum designed to respond to the unique needs of students and the community.

The proposal has been evaluated by external reviewers who have expressed support for the program. CBC has been responsive to reviewer comments and has committed to incorporate many of the suggestions for improvement as it more fully develops the program curriculum during the planning year.

Adding bachelor's degree granting authority to Columbia Basin College's mission has implications for accreditation and potential impacts on students, faculty, and institutional resources. CBC has been thoughtful about these issues and has dedicated resources to support additional library resources and student support services. These efforts should position the college to support students, faculty, and staff in the upper-division coursework.

The program would not duplicate existing programs and the costs appear to be reasonable, given the facility and infrastructure needs required to support a new four-year degree program at a community college.

Recommendation

Based on careful review of the program proposal and supplemental sources, HECB staff recommends approval of Columbia Basin College's Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management. The HECB education committee discussed the proposal during its June 23, 2008 meeting and recommended approval by the full board.

RESOLUTION NO. 08-23

WHEREAS, Columbia Basin College proposes to offer a Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management; and

WHEREAS, The program is consistent with legislative authorization to expand the number of community and technical colleges offering applied baccalaureate degrees; and

WHEREAS, The program would support the institution's mission by providing a degree pathway for students that would support their career and educational goals and the needs of the local community for an appropriately prepared workforce; and

WHEREAS, The institution has committed to provide the services and support necessary to expand its institutional role and mission by offering a baccalaureate degree program; and

WHEREAS, The program would support the *2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education* by providing opportunities for students to earn higher level degrees that respond to the state's economic needs; and

WHEREAS, The proposal identifies strategies to attract and retain a diverse student body; and

WHEREAS, The proposed program would respond to demonstrated student, employer, and community needs and would be consistent with both the *State and Regional Needs Assessment* and the institution's own assessment of need; and

WHEREAS, Students would benefit from the program because it would provide a career-oriented bachelor's degree pathway for those who wish to progress in their field; and

WHEREAS, The program would not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs in Washington and would be offered at a reasonable cost;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management at Columbia Basin College, effective July 21, 2008.

Adopted:

July 21, 2008

Attest:

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Bill Grinstein, Chair

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Roberta Greene, Secretary