



THE UNIVERSITY
of
WISCONSIN
MADISON

October 1, 2009

Provost Paul DeLuca
150 Bascom Hall
Campus

Dear Provost DeLuca,

On behalf of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, I am pleased to submit the attached **Proposal to Increase Non-Business Student Access to General Business Education** for Phase 1 funding via the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates. This proposal meets the request for ideas that “generate faculty and instructional support ... to offer the courses, majors, and experiences students need” and those that “expand best practices and innovation in teaching and learning, curricular design, and student services in order to enhance student outcomes.”

Student demand on campus for business education far exceeds the capacity of existing courses and programs in the School of Business. This proposal seeks to support the School of Business in offering general business courses to non-business majors (especially those in professional and scientific programs), to develop an interdisciplinary capstone course for students with an interest in integrating their major field of study with business issues, and to enhance curricular and extracurricular business-related opportunities for students.

Sincerely,

Molly Jahn
Dean and Director

**THE MADISON INITIATIVE FOR UNDERGRADUATES
UW – Madison**

Proposal to increase Non-Business Student Access to General Business Education

RENK AGRIBUSINESS INSTITUTE

College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

INTRODUCTION

There has been considerable interest from both students and the Board of Visitors of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) in adding a core (2 to 3 class) business curriculum for majors in the College. Similar interests have been expressed by College of Engineering clientele. This reflects the needs of many CALS graduates to combine exceptional training in their specific science disciplines with a basic understanding of the overall business structure and operational environment faced by the firms that hire them. This need will become more acute as Wisconsin transitions towards a high technology business environment, with many CALS and College of Engineering's future employers represented by start-up type firms that face unique challenges in accessing risk capital and developing sustainable growth strategies. In high technology firms focused on the commercialization of new knowledge, it is often critical for all employees to have a basic understanding of the business environment in which they wish to operate.

The Renk Agribusiness Institute (RAI) has had a successful history of collaborating with Business School faculty developing these opportunities at the graduate level. Renk faculty were actively involved in both developing and teaching in the Agribusiness MBA program that used to be offered by the Business School. This program recognized the unique business environments faced by agribusiness firms, and allowed for a specific focus on the unique challenges of agribusiness for students looking to work for food companies, commodity brokerage firms, and life science start-up companies. This program was re-designed and rolled into the MBA for Strategic Management in Life and Engineering Sciences (SMILES) when the Business School streamlined their MBA offerings a few years ago. SMILES generally serves students with graduate degrees in science and/or engineering by tailoring an MBA program that focuses on the unique challenges high technology businesses face in the private sector. The current Director of the Renk Agribusiness Institute participated in the initial development of the SMILES program, and still serves on the advisory committee.

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

RAI was established in 1996 to meet the needs of agribusiness in transition. Much of the initial focus, however, was on graduate education. The Agribusiness MBA, and now SMILES, prepares graduate students to become managers of organizations that require an understanding of both technical agriculture and business. At the undergraduate level, the

Agribusiness Management Degree offered by the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, which includes business courses from the Business School, provides similar training. What has been missing, however, is an opportunity to expose non-business or AAE majors to the concepts and tools necessary for an agribusiness or engineering firm to compete in the current business world. Today's graduates are expected to have a thorough understanding of the agricultural and life sciences skills obtained in their degree area paired with functional business skills. Agribusiness employers are demanding that employees understand not only the biological dimensions of producing and marketing food and fiber products, but also the unique role of government, the function of distinct institutions such as cooperatives and marketing orders, and the role and institutions associated with the provision of risk capital. Agribusiness represents a full quarter of the Wisconsin job market. For this industry to continue to thrive it will be critical for its future scientists and engineers to also understand risk management, marketing, cash flow projections, and business planning.

Beginning in 2006 and repeated each year since, the CALS Board of Visitors has recommended an increased focus on business curricula within all CALS majors. In addition, students, employers and alumni have asked for an increased awareness in all CALS majors of basic business literacy (similar interests have been expressed from various affiliates of the College of Engineering).

In response to requests from CALS as well as other units across campus, the Business School re-designed their Business 100 and Business 101 courses for the 2009/2010 academic year. These are now courses that cover a host of general business topics, including many of those requested by the CALS Board of Visitors, and are directed at non-business type majors. For Fall 2009, the initial course was capped at 120 students, and quickly filled up. It appears that of the 120 students, 5 were from CALS. This proved two things: 1) a general business offering is in high demand, and 2) current capacity constraints (physical classroom space, faculty resources, and TA resources) are not sufficient to meet overall demand, and satisfy the desire to insure that a large percentage of CALS students have access to the general business courses.

Successful funding of the proposal presented here will do five things:

- 1) Aid the business school in increasing capacity to deliver a general business core across campus.
- 2) Facilitate the development of a college wide capstone across CALS that will allow students to integrate their business and major field study, in a multidisciplinary setting, to investigate the opportunities/challenges of bringing commercial success to scientific discoveries. This would be offered as a substitute to current capstone requirements of all CALS departments, but not as a replacement. In other words, individual departments within CALS and individual students may still choose to satisfy their capstone requirements with the traditional department offerings. Thus, the college wide capstone will simply increase student choice and opportunity, not replace current opportunities.
- 3) Allow the development of a formal internship program across CALS that would

facilitate the placement of CALS students with firms that are active employers of UW-Madison graduates. This is currently done by individual departments, some in more and some in less formal ways. The advantage of a college wide internship initiative is the ability to match students and businesses across departments. This would not be a replacement for Departmental internship programs that already exist and are successful.

- 4) Develop and maintain the CALS business opportunities. This would include developing the basic curriculum (likely to include the two general business courses offered by the Business School, and an agribusiness specific elective that might come from the offerings in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics (AAE), and the opportunity to satisfy the degree capstone requirements through the college wide capstone offering described above.
- 5) Increase the capacity of AAE faculty to offer their business related courses as part of the CALS business curriculum. Constraints now exist because of a lack of TA support in AAE, and the need to serve AAE majors first. For example AAE 322, commodity markets, is generally capped at 60 students. However, it actively draws students not only from Agribusiness Management (it is a required course in that curriculum), but from other CALS majors, the business school, and L&S. It is an applied course on futures and options markets. Two years ago a TA was used, the course cap was lifted, and 90 students registered. Unfortunately, funding did not exist to continue TA support for the course, and it reverted to its binding enrollment cap. By reducing capacity constraints on this and potentially other business focused AAE courses, a broad cross sections of CALS students could be served.

REQUEST

The Renk Agribusiness Institute (RAI) is requesting one faculty hire and three half-time TA positions to increase business education opportunities for non-business students. While the primary focus is on CALS students, the increased capacity will also enhance business education opportunities for students of Engineering and L&S.

RAI is uniquely qualified to serve as the primary unit of responsibility for both the faculty hire and the TA's. The Renk Institute is currently considering the possibility of seeking a re-structuring to allow it to be an explicit tenure home (similar in structure to the LaFollette Institute) that could provide a place for new faculty hires that would focus on the intersection of life sciences technology, environmental sustainability and the commercialization of discoveries. If it is decided to move in that direction, the responsibilities of the new hire in coordinating and facilitating business education for life science undergraduates would match closely with the Renk objective. It would also be possible, depending on the successful faculty hire's research interests and experiences, to seek a joint appointment with the Business School (the Director of Renk currently holds a zero budget appointment in the Business School), a joint appointment with AAE, or an appointment (and commensurate title) directly in the CALS Deans office for Academic Programs. These would also be possibilities if Renk does not move towards offering an explicit tenure home for faculty.

RAI recently accepted responsibility for facilitating undergraduate business education in CALS, and has worked with Business School faculty on developing access for CALS students to Business School courses. However, with the retirement of Professor Bill Dobson a few years ago, RAI faculty capacity was cut by 50 percent. Nonetheless, RAI faculty have recently taught not only classes required for a CALS degree in Agribusiness Management but also required courses in the Finance Department at the School of Business. An additional faculty line in Agribusiness would significantly increase the ability of CALS to aid the Business School in expanding its business offerings to non-majors by serving as a teaching resource for the Business School (actually teaching in the Business curriculum if needed), teaching the CALS college wide capstone, providing advising services to CALS majors looking at both accessing business courses and developing a portfolio of business experience to bring to the job market, providing a structured business internship program for CALS majors, and working with AAE to insure access to their agribusiness relevant courses for non AAE students.

Two of the TA lines being proposed would be used to directly support the Business School offerings in general business (the students would be assigned to the Business and/or RAI faculty involved in teaching the general business courses), and the third would be used to allow expansion of AAE business relevant courses (for example the Commodity Markets course described above) such that no enrollment cap would be necessary.

Additional benefits of the overall business access initiative proposed here include:

- Allowing current faculty more time for undergraduate advising and career networking.
- Build on relationships with businesses hiring both undergraduate and graduate CALS students.
- Create new research projects for undergraduates studying investment behavior, risk management, forecasting, and entrepreneurship as they relate to the commercialization of life sciences discoveries.
- Enhance cross disciplinary and cross college experiences for students, and collaborations for faculty.

By adding faculty to provide the business linkages that complement study in the areas of life sciences, food, nutrition, and engineering CALS will enhance its already established international reputation of excellence in undergraduate education. Our graduates will not only be viewed as having some of the best scientific training available, but will also be seen as having a unique perspective on delivering their technical knowledge to the market place in a way that helps insure the greatest probability of improving societal welfare. This will result in expertise that a UW-Madison degree in sciences and engineering would uniquely provide, and will match earlier RAI/Business School initiatives at the graduate level.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Success of this initiative will be measured first by the number of non-business students, specifically CALS students, enriching their science training by taking the general business and AAE agribusiness courses, and participating in the college wide capstone program. Given that current and historical enrollment caps have been binding, growth in participation is expected to be significant. Additional indicators of success will come from feedback from employers of CALS students, and the CALS Board of Visitors. The focus of evaluation will be the extent to which implementation of the proposed business education curriculum satisfies what until now has been perceived as a deficiency by off campus clientele (employers, Board of Visitors, etc.). A third measure of success will come from the number of non-CALS students that take advantage of increased opportunities in general business education coupled with agribusiness specific experiences as a result of closer collaboration between RAI and the Business School in increasing general university-wide access.

CROSS CAMPUS COLLABORATION

While it is anticipated that the greatest collaboration initially will be across CALS and the School of Business, it is also anticipated that the joint sharing of responsibilities between CALS (in providing service to the Business School and business advising/mentoring services to its own students) and the School of Business (in taking responsibility for the design and delivery of the two general business courses, with both faculty and TA support from CALS) will lead to future collaborations between CALS, the Business School, and other campus units, specifically including the College of Engineering.

RECRUITING OF CANDIDATES

The growth of agribusiness as a specific area of study in both Agricultural Economics programs and Business Schools suggests that there is a broad pool from which potential applicants can be sought. RAI would seek the advice and help of the Business School in recruiting from the Business School contacts, and utilize the resources of both the American Economics Association and the American Agricultural and Applied Economics Association in recruiting a diverse pool of applicants. It is anticipated the search committee would include the Director of RAI, faculty from the UW-Madison School of Business, representatives from the CALS Dean's office, and AAE faculty. Because of the unique nature of the position and the focus on cross college collaboration, the search would not be conducted in the usual way with a single Department's personnel committee. Rather it would be a collaborative effort including those units with which the successful candidate would need to interact and cooperate.

BUDGET

One Faculty Position:

Assistant or Associate Professor: Salary up to \$130,000, Startup package \$50,000

Three Half-Time Teaching Assistants:

These would be assigned to faculty in CALS and/or the Business School who will be teaching the courses: Salary \$15,477 each

SUMMARY

This proposal responds to the specific needs of non-business students in life sciences and engineering to get exposure to basic business principles, as put forth by the students themselves, firms recruiting our graduates, and the CALS Board of Visitors. It does this in recognition of the constraints faced by the Business School in satisfying the needs of their own majors while simultaneously being asked to serve what has been a non-traditional clientele for them. Providing resources that can support the Business School in developing and delivering their general business offerings while simultaneously taking away their need to provide advising or other mentoring services to students that are not their majors but have some interest in business allows the Business School to maximize its ability to serve the larger campus community, while also allowing CALS to provide the necessary context to which the business principles will be applied for their students (agribusiness specific internships, other courses beyond general business, and a business/science linked capstone experience).