

1 **REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO IMPLEMENT A**
2 **BACHELOR OF LIBERAL STUDIES IN APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCE**
3 **AT UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**
4 **PREPARED BY UW-MADISON**

5
6
7 **ABSTRACT**

8
9 The University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison proposes to establish a Bachelor of Liberal
10 Studies (BLS) and a companion major, Applied Social Science (MASS), to be offered through the
11 College of Letters & Science (L&S) in an entirely online format. As one of a set of offerings under
12 the Chancellor's Online Learning Initiative, BLS-MASS supports the UW goal to increase offerings
13 for returning adult students who have earned some college credit but who have not yet
14 completed a first undergraduate degree. This 120-credit liberal arts degree emphasizes
15 knowledge, skills, and abilities of general interest and relevant to this population. L&S will build
16 upon its success educating a traditional age college-going student population, broadening
17 access to part-time adult learners who have needs that are not met by traditional residential
18 undergraduate programs. Programs serving this population support a well-educated citizenry
19 and workforce and are tied to the economic prosperity of the state and of the region, as access
20 to baccalaureate education serves as a pathway to economic equity, stability, and mobility.
21 Online undergraduate degree programs provide access for non-traditional and returning
22 students, particularly working adults, including those seeking to switch career course, and those
23 with caregiving responsibilities. A market analysis found that generalist "liberal studies"
24 degree/major (coupled with majors in various areas of the Social Sciences) have a large and
25 growing market. Analyses conducted for the university have identified a large number of
26 potential students who seek opportunities to complete their studies with a flexible, affordable,
27 and high-quality program of study.

28
29 The L&S Dean's Office will coordinate the faculty oversight committee, involvement of
30 faculty in design and delivery of the program, and connections with centralized student support
31 and coaching services for online programs. The BLS will require students to complete 120
32 college credits (general education, degree, and major requirements), with at least 30 credits
33 completed in UW-Madison courses taken while enrolled in the program. Integrative coursework
34 across broad areas of knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences will also include generalist and
35 communication courses in computer, data, and information studies, and at least two required
36 courses will integrate prior academic, professional, and life experience to serve as a bridge to
37 more focused study in the major. The 30-credit major will afford students opportunities to
38 integrate academic study with applied activities from their workplace, internships, volunteer and
39 service-learning placements, and career exploration coursework. The major in Applied Social
40 Science is the first of a series of majors that will be proposed to be offered in conjunction with
41 the BLS. The BLS and companion majors will provide students with a flexible curriculum that
42 better accommodates transfer credit than the traditional BA/BS degrees, while maintaining the
43 academic rigor and liberal arts and science strengths for which programs in L&S are known.

1
2 Market-based tuition will be set at a level intended to be reflective of the brand and
3 quality of UW-Madison programming, while also maintaining a level that will be competitive in
4 the online market.
5

6 7 **PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION**

8 9 **University Name**

10 University of Wisconsin-Madison
11

12 **Title of Proposed Academic Degree Program**

13 Bachelor of Liberal Studies
14 Major in Applied Social Science
15

16 **Degree Designation(s)**

17 BLS
18

19 **Mode of Delivery**

20 Single university
21 Online
22

23 **Department or Functional Equivalent**

24 Dean's Office (Division of Teaching & Learning Administration)
25

26 **College, School, or Functional Equivalent**

27 College of Letters & Science (L&S)
28

29 **Proposed Date of Implementation**

30 Fall 2022
31

32 **Projected Enrollments and Graduates by Year Five**

33 Table 1 represents enrollment and graduation projections for students entering the
34 program over the next five years. By the end of Year 5, it is expected x students will have
35 enrolled in the program and x students will have graduated from the program. The average
36 student retention rate is projected to be lower than UW-Madison's exceptionally high year-to-
37 year rate for first-time, full-time, residential/in-person undergraduate programs (~95%), but the
38 university has invested heavily in resources and support structures to realize very high rates of
39 retention as compared to other online degree programs. BLS students will meet UW-Madison's
40 standards for admission, will be required to complete a preparatory "how to learn online"
41 bootcamp, have access to cohort communities, highly contextualized enrollment coaching,
42 individualized career coaching, and courses designed specifically to achieve rigorous learning
43 outcomes in an online context. Entangled Solutions market research into retention rates and

1 peer comparisons suggest that the UW-Madison program can be modeled with an 87.5%
 2 retention rate.
 3

Table 1: Five-Year Academic Degree Program Enrollment Projections

Students/Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
New Students	25	60	60	60	60
Continuing Students	-	22	75	188	270
Total Enrollment	25	82	145	148	330
Graduating Students			10	30	60

4
 5 **Tuition Structure**

6 For students enrolled in the BLS-MASS program, a flat per-credit tuition rate
 7 (\$600/credit) will apply; there is no distinction made between resident and non-resident rates.
 8 Segregated fees do not apply and students enrolling in the BLS will not be eligible for students
 9 services supported by the segregated fee system¹. The program is designed to be completed
 10 with part-time study, with students typically enrolling in 6 credits per 15-week term (equivalent
 11 to UW-Madison’s definition of “half-time” status sufficient for financial aid eligibility); thus, the
 12 cost per semester for a part-time student enrolled in 6 credits would be \$4,050, all attributable
 13 to tuition.

14 All online students are subject to additional one-time fees that are considered in the cost
 15 of attendance for the student’s first semester: \$65 Official Document Fee (covers the cost to
 16 produce official student documentation throughout the students career and as an alumnus, e.g.
 17 transcripts, degree verification, enrollment verification, etc.) and \$200-250 for New Student
 18 Transfer fee (covers cost of orientation and advising).
 19
 20

21 **DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM**

22
 23 **Overview of the Program**

24 The BLS will require students to complete 120 college credits. These will include the UW-
 25 Madison general education requirements, as well as requirements that serve the liberal studies
 26 degree and the major. Most of the credits will be broadly categorized, to better accommodate
 27 credits from prior undergraduate study that students will transfer in; however, to ensure that the
 28 program retains a distinctive “UW-Madison” quality, the program will require a small number of
 29 courses specific to the program, and at least 30 upper-level credits taken “in residence” – that is,
 30 earned through UW-Madison courses completed while enrolled in the program. The curriculum
 31 will include credits that include the broad divisions of study traditionally found in liberal arts
 32 programs (arts and humanities, science, social science) as well as courses in emerging areas of
 33 computer, data, and information studies. Broad study across a variety of disciplines and
 34 exposure to a diverse range of perspectives will reinforce the many “ways of knowing” humans

¹ <https://bursar.wisc.edu/tuition-and-fees/tuition-rates/segregated-fees>

1 have used to understand and represent their world as they identify and address problems and
2 opportunities. This curricular flexibility is essential to the ability of the program to accommodate
3 the credit students bring to the program, while also helping to integrate that work with what
4 they do as BLS students.

5 At least two required courses will integrate students' prior academic, professional, and
6 life experience and serve as a bridge to more focused study in their major. The major (at least 30
7 credits of the full 120 credits), will afford students opportunities to integrate academic study
8 with applied activities from their workplace, internships, volunteer and service-learning
9 placements, and career exploration coursework. The first BLS major proposed, in Applied Social
10 Science, will explore the social sciences - the systematic and evidence-based study of the social
11 world, encompassing all of the political, economic, legal, technological and cultural ideas,
12 structures and processes that humans create to live together as a society. Social science data,
13 methods, and theories are used to understand how social life works to help social life work
14 better. Applied study across the social sciences, integrated with a broad liberal arts foundation
15 and the infusion of diverse perspectives, offers an ideal framework for identifying issues,
16 questions, and opportunities that are important to humans, groups, institutions, and society, the
17 study of which can lead to a more effective and equitable solutions to social problems.

18 19 **Student Learning Outcomes and Program Objectives**

20 The BLS learning outcomes align with the goals of the UW-Madison General
21 Education Requirements² as well as with the aspirations expressed in the UW-Madison
22 "Wisconsin Experience"³, which secure for UW students the essential tools of learning
23 associated with a college education, doing so in association with UW-Madison. This
24 alignment signals that students enrolled in the UW online programs will be "Badgers," just
25 like the students who are engaged in traditional residential undergraduate programs.

26
27 Students who complete the BLS will engage in systematic, collaborative reflection on
28 past college, career, community, and life experiences in order to synthesize these experiences
29 with new degree completion coursework across the liberal arts and sciences. By graduation,
30 BLS students will be able to:

- 31 1. Identify and integrate many types and sources of information. Students will be able to
32 recognize, reason with, and combine multiple forms of qualitative and quantitative
33 information and data, from diverse perspectives and sources.
- 34 2. Analyze information using a variety of methods. Students will be able to critically
35 evaluate and analyze information using methods from the arts and humanities, the
36 social sciences, the natural and physical sciences, and the computational and data
37 sciences, informed by diverse perspectives.
- 38 3. Investigate important problems, issues, and opportunities for change. Students will be
39 able to approach complex topics from multiple perspectives, understanding them in a

² <https://gened.wisc.edu/general-education-requirements/general-education-learning-outcomes/>

³ <https://wisconsinexperience.wisc.edu/>

- 1 variety of contexts and from different cultural lenses.
- 2 4. Develop effective, culturally sensitive evidence-based solutions. Students will be able to
3 combine their rigorous analysis of relevant evidence to develop and defend creative
4 insights and effective solutions concerning these important issues.
- 5 5. Communicate persuasively with a broad range of people. Based on an understanding of
6 the varied ways in which people experience the world, students will be able to
7 collaborate and communicate proposed solutions effectively and ethically with people
8 from a range of perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds.

9

10 Building on the broad foundation of study in the liberal arts and sciences, students who pursue
11 the major in Applied Social Science will pursue additional depth through an organized course
12 of study across the broad social and behavioral sciences. Thus, the learning outcomes listed
13 above may also be expressed as more specific capacities and opportunities within the major:

14

- 15 1. Students will be able to recognize, reason with, and combine multiple forms of
16 qualitative and quantitative information and data that are common to the social
17 sciences, from diverse perspectives and sources.
- 18 2. Students will be able to critically evaluate and analyze information using a variety of
19 methods common to the social sciences, informed by diverse perspectives.
- 20 3. Students will be able to approach complex social, interpersonal, and institutional issues
21 and opportunities for innovation from multiple perspectives, understanding them in a
22 variety of contexts and from different cultural lenses.
- 23 4. Students will be able to use tools and techniques common to the social sciences to
24 combine their rigorous analysis of relevant evidence to develop and defend creative
25 insights and effective solutions concerning these important issues.
- 26 5. Based on an understanding of the varied ways in which people experience social life
27 and social institutions, students will be able to collaborate and communicate proposed
28 solutions effectively and ethically with people from a range of perspectives, cultures,
29 and backgrounds.

30

31

32 **Program Requirements and Curriculum**

33 Students admitted to the BLS must meet all admission standards for UW-Madison. In
34 addition, because the BLS is not designed to serve first-time, first year students, individuals
35 admitted to the BLS must have completed at least 12 credits of "liberal arts" transferable college
36 credit, completed after high-school graduation. (Technical and applied professional
37 training/certification credit will not apply to this program.)

38

39 Table 2 illustrates the curriculum for the proposed program. The program requires
40 completion of 120 credits, most of which fall into broad categories of elective credit, which is
41 designed to accommodate students who are admitted with a large amount of college-level

1 transfer credit. UW-Madison uses a strategy where categories are designated to meet University
 2 General Education and various "breadth" requirements, based on criteria associated with
 3 learning outcomes expected for those categories. This system is applied to the evaluation of
 4 transfer credit and is represented throughout the catalog of courses, making it possible to
 5 accept a wide range of elective credit in service to the skills, concepts, and principles that inform
 6 these categories. To connect these broad experiences, a small number of courses designed to
 7 engage students in integrative thinking across the domains of learning represented by the
 8 broad categories will be used strategically to help students weave together their experiences.
 9 Because all UW-Madison courses that serve this program will be dedicated to this audience,
 10 these "integrative" elements can be echoed throughout the curriculum wherever it makes sense
 11 to do so. Courses will be offered throughout the traditional Fall/Spring 16-week semesters, as
 12 well as during the Summer term. Courses will be delivered largely asynchronously to meet the
 13 needs of students who will need to work school into their existing schedules, rather than
 14 requiring their employment and caregiving obligations to work around school.
 15
 16

Table 2: Bachelor of Liberal Studies, Major in Applied Social Science Curriculum

UW-Madison General Education Requirements:

College-level Composition and Communication (Communication A)	3 credits
College-level Communication in Context (Communication B)	3 credits
College-level Math, Logic, Computation (Quantitative Reasoning A)	3 credits
College-level Quantitative Reasoning in a Disciplinary Context (Quantitative Reasoning B)	3 credits
Race and Ethnic Diversity in the US (ESR)	3 credits

UW-Madison and BLS Breadth Requirements:

(Select from courses with the following designations; courses with multiple breadth designations may only be used to meet one breadth requirement)	9 credits
Breadth in the Arts & Humanities	
Breadth in the Social & Behavioral Sciences	9 credits
Breadth in the Natural Sciences	9 credits

BLS Broad Field Requirements:

Beyond US: Global and Language Study	6 credits
Data Science and Digital Communication	3 credits
Race, Diversity, and Global Issues in Context	3 credits

BLS Integrative Requirement:

Integrating College, Career and Liberal Studies	6 credits
---	-----------

(Select from)	
Inter-LS 145: How to Succeed in College	1 Credit
Inter-LS 210: Taking Career Initiative	1 Credit
Inter-LS 215: Communicating About Careers	3 Credits
Inter-LS 260: Internship	1-3 Credits
Inter-LS XXX: Connecting College, Career, Community	3 Credits
Inter-LS XXX: Applying Liberal Studies	3 Credits

Major in Applied Social Science

Foundations

Inter-LS 301: Methods in the Applied Social Sciences	3 credits
Inter-LS 302: Issues in the Applied Social Sciences (may be repeated twice under different topics)	3 credits

Integrative Depth

(18 credits minimum)

Ethical Communication	3-9 credits
Diverse Communities	3-9 credits
Research Tools	3-9 credits
Social Issues	3-9 credits

Capstone

Inter-LS 601: Applied Social Sciences Project Proposal	3 credits
Inter-LS 602: Applied Social Sciences Action Report	3 credits

30 credits

Elective credit to reach 120 minimum credits

(from any category listed above) 12-30 credits

Total Credits 120 credits

Additional requirements:

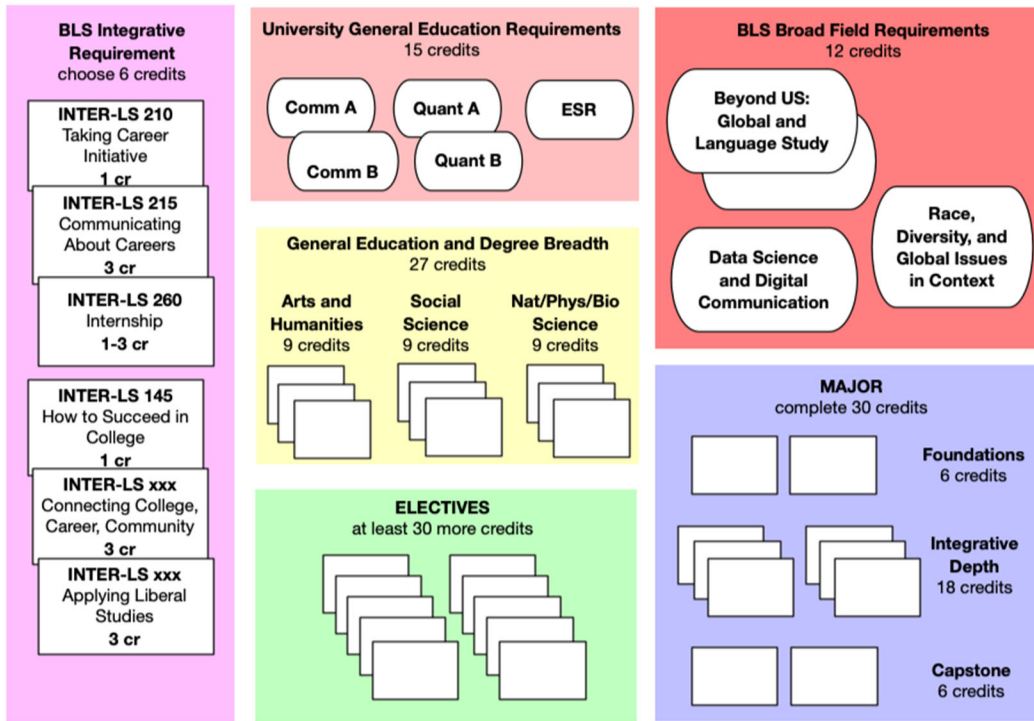
Residency: Minimum 30 credits after the first 86 credits must be completed in UW-Madison courses.

Rigor: Minimum of 15 credits completed in the major must be in Intermediate or Advanced level courses.

Quality of Work: 2.0 minimum GPA for all credits completed

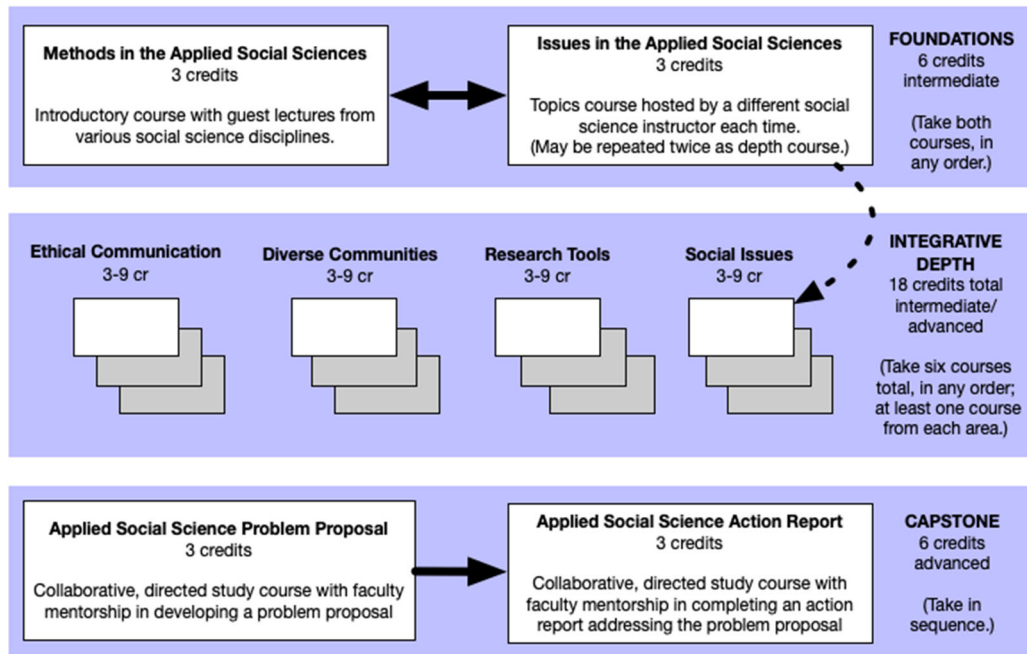
BACHELOR OF LIBERAL STUDIES

120 credits required (may bring up to 90 credits from previous college experience if they map to these requirements)



1
2

MAJOR IN APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCE
30 credits required



3
4

1 **Assessment of Outcomes and Objectives**

2 Given the range and variety of academic credit students admitted to the BLS will bring,
3 assessment strategies will necessarily be flexible and will rely somewhat on self-report and
4 indirect measures. First, students admitted to the program will be invited to articulate their
5 needs, expectations, and aspirations in the form of a survey that can also be used for purposes
6 of advising and coaching individual students; these data, in aggregate form, will be compared to
7 responses provided via a similar instrument administered upon program completion or exit.
8 Second, student learning will be measured more directly in key courses that serve the program
9 that are likely to be taken by the majority of students: for example, all of the career-oriented
10 courses include integrated assessment strategies, as do capstone courses designed for the
11 major. Third, all courses designed specifically to serve the BLS program and its majors will
12 include at least one of the learning outcomes stated above (adapted to reflect course content)
13 among the learning outcomes programmed into the campus-wide assessment management
14 system (Assessment, Evaluation, & Intervention System, or AEFIS). This assessment tool affords
15 instructors the ability to conduct both formative and summative assessment at the course-level,
16 while also providing data that can be used across multiple courses to gauge overall program
17 performance.

18
19 The program committee will evaluate assessment data annually, for consideration of
20 program modification and improvement. Assessment activities are reported annually to the
21 Office of Student Learning Assessment. As with all UW-Madison programs, proposals to modify
22 academic programs are required to include a rationale for change that addresses the role
23 assessment of student learning plays in seeking program improvements. These activities also
24 provide data that is incorporated into the regular review of academic programs.

25 26 27 **Diversity**

28 The BLS degree includes a foundational tenet that an authentic commitment to diversity,
29 across a range of dimensions, leads to the most effective and equitable solutions to social
30 problems. Through this degree program, students will be exposed to a range of implicit and
31 explicit curricular components meant to be representative of not only interdisciplinary
32 perspectives, but also perspectives that vary by culture, geographic region, race and ethnicity,
33 sexual and gender identity, disability status, and other dimensions of diversity. Required courses
34 include focused study of these issues, building on and exceeding the foundation of General
35 Education Ethnic Studies coursework; for example, attention to issues of diversity and diverse
36 perspectives permeate courses on careers and internships, as do courses focused on
37 understanding cultures and issues beyond US borders.

38
39 The proposed program curriculum and learning outcomes will advance inclusive
40 excellence in the following ways. The curricular components of each major will be representative
41 of a diverse set of perspectives, as opposed to centered around or focused on a presumed
42 majority group, population, or perspective. Through course readings, discussion, assignments,
43 and experiential learning, students will develop skills to identify, assess, and integrate diverse
44 perspectives in considering and developing solutions to social problems and the creation of

1 equitable opportunities to enhance societal wellbeing. Second, through their coursework,
2 students will engage in critical reflection and analysis of their own beliefs and lived experiences
3 as they relate to their understanding of the causes of social problems, and carefully consider
4 how these beliefs and experiences shape their understanding of perceived solutions to social
5 problems, and how they align or conflict with perspectives different than their own. Third,
6 through a range of extra-curricular learning opportunities offered within and across the College
7 of Letters & Science and the University at large, students will be exposed to individuals, groups,
8 and perspectives that represent diverse and intersectional identities, experiences which will
9 further inform and support the learning goals of the degree.

10
11 L&S is committed to pursuing equity in its proposed BLS+MASS degree program.
12 Aligned with other programs offered through UW-Madison Online, marketing and recruitment is
13 supported through Division of Continuing Studies (DCS). DCS marketing and recruitment staff
14 will implement several efforts to pursue equity in these programs including advertising to
15 diverse audiences in channels unique to them with tracking tags on digital ads to quantify and
16 measure efficacy; developing marketing materials that speak directly to diverse audiences; build
17 on partnerships with such groups as the Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee, Centro
18 Hispano, Black and Latinx Chambers of Commerce; and track individual registrations at
19 recruitment events to provide specific and unique support to each audience. Recruitment events
20 (e.g. webinars) and support will also be available at various times of the day, including evenings
21 and weekends to promote wider accessibility.

22
23 Furthermore, program support has been designed to recognize that these adult learners
24 have different needs and expectations than traditional learners – including expectations of quick,
25 proactive service with minimized touchpoints. UW-Madison Online programs have implemented
26 a new student support model to accommodate these needs. Specifically, Enrollment Coaches
27 serve as a single point of proactive support for prospective learners to help them navigate the
28 admission process and financial aid. Shortly after being admitted, students will participate in an
29 online orientation designed to support their success as an online student. During orientation,
30 they will meet their individual academic and career advisor who will provide continued
31 personalized, proactive support throughout the learner’s journey, aiding them in overcoming
32 barriers to success and degree completion. In addition, staff will monitor key performance
33 indicators such as course enrollment and grading patterns, retention rates, time-to-degree, and
34 completion rates to identify and address any performance gaps and ensure equitable access to
35 resources and services throughout their experience.

36
37 As a liberal arts program designed to integrate and synthesize information, the program
38 will provide intellectual diversity by drawing on a range and variety of disciplines in a
39 collaborative way from the many departments and perspectives represented in the College of
40 Letters & Science. This approach is reflected in a curriculum that is intended to promote learning
41 that is not only broad and inclusive of these disciplines, but which is specifically inclusive of
42 issues and perspectives of minoritized populations in the US and in the world. The committee
43 convened to oversee the program, is also expected to be sufficiently diverse to reflect and meet
44 the needs of a diverse student population.

1
2 At the College level, L&S is dedicated to ensuring equity in the recruitment and hiring of
3 faculty, instructional and support staff, following procedures intended to promote inclusive
4 excellence. This includes training search committees to guard against implicit bias, using best
5 practices to advertise in positions in a wide range of outlets to develop diverse hiring pools,
6 utilizing review and ranking procedures that state hiring criteria objectively, and consistently
7 implement those criteria.. Faculty hiring programs such as the “Target of Opportunity” program,
8 “cohort hiring” practices, and a variety of programs designed to mentor new faculty successfully
9 to tenure, are all focused specifically on identifying, hiring, and retaining a diverse group of
10 excellent faculty.

11
12 UW-Madison’s diversity efforts are guided by a strategic framework that seeks to “Retain,
13 Equip, Engage, and Lead” to move the university from theory to practice and achieve the
14 institutional vision that UW-Madison “will be a model public university in the 21st Century,
15 serving as a resource to the public and working to enhance the quality of life in the state, the
16 nation, and the world”.⁴ The BLS-MASS (and the majors to follow) are aligned with this mission.
17 This innovation is a key strategy by which the university will be “opening new forms of access to
18 people from every background,” by creating a welcoming pathway for many learners who may
19 have perhaps abandoned their aspiration to complete a college degree. By redesigning
20 baccalaureate education to put the needs of these learners first, and by providing the support
21 they need to succeed, the program is expected to achieve “ R.E.E.L. change.”

22
23 In addition to the program’s support of this campus wide initiative, the College of Letters
24 & Science has also added a new leadership position in this area. The Associate Dean for
25 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will serve as a point-person for DEI initiatives within the College
26 and will be a consultant to the BLS program committee.

27
28 All of these efforts align support UW-Madison’s continued satisfaction of the Higher
29 Learning Commission’s Assumed Practices and Criteria for Accreditation as they relate to the
30 expectation that institutions engage in strategic planning, allocate resources, engage in hiring
31 practices, and offer students an educational opportunity that “recognizes human and cultural
32 diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a
33 multicultural world.”⁵

34 35 **Collaborative Nature of the Program**

36 Not applicable.

37 38 **Projected Time to Degree**

39 Due to the nature of this program as a degree completion program that assumes year-
40 round, part-time study, it is difficult to estimate time to degree; however, students who enter the
41 program should be able to complete 15-18 credits per year. Thus, students who enter the

⁴ <https://diversity.wisc.edu/framework/our-process/>

⁵ <https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html>

1 program with 60 credits should be able to reach 120 credits in four years of study; student who
2 enter the program with fewer credits will take longer. Though not envisioned as a full-time
3 program (minimum 12 credits/term, 36-38 credits/year with year-round study), as the online
4 course array is fully developed and enrollments justify increasing the array of courses available,
5 some students will likely be able to complete more credits per year to decrease time to degree.
6

7 **Program Review**

8 All new UW-Madison programs undergo a formal review conducted by the College of
9 Letters & Science Academic Planning Council and reported to the Provost five-years after
10 implementation. If approved for continuation, the program will be subject to the UW-Madison
11 requirement for program review at not more than 10-year intervals, following UW-Madison
12 program review guidelines. Programs that are subject to special tuition models undergo a
13 financial and operational review three years after implementation, to allow for any necessary
14 course corrections and to provide a foundation for the five-year review. Finally, the Dean may
15 convene a review at any time, should circumstances suggest that a review is needed.

16 To prepare for the five-year and subsequent program reviews, the program will monitor
17 and present data on enrollment, completion rates, student demographics, and other data
18 elements made available in reports and data visualizations through the UW-Madison Repository
19 for Administrative Dashboards and Reports (RADAR). Programs undergoing review also provide
20 summative information drawn from assessments of student learning outcomes, student advising
21 and support, and any program changes made based on continuous assessment and budgetary
22 summaries. The program prepares a self-study based on these data. The self-study is considered
23 by a review committee, the dean, and by governance committees. The program faculty will take
24 the lead in addressing recommendations arising from these reviews to implement changes to
25 program policies and practices. Program review activity is reported annually to the Provost.
26

27 **Accreditation**

28 UW-Madison is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, and is approved to offer
29 online/distance programs.
30
31

32 **JUSTIFICATION**

34 **Rationale and Relation to Mission**

35 In 2019, the University of Wisconsin–Madison introduced a new initiative to increase
36 access to education through the Online Learning Initiative. This initiative was launched by
37 Chancellor Rebecca Blank in the context of the 2020–25 Strategic Framework, which advances
38 UW–Madison’s vision to be a model public university in the 21st century. One of the five
39 priorities in the Strategic Framework is: “Excellence in Teaching and Educational Achievement:
40 Provide access to a world-class, affordable educational experience.” A featured initiative within
41 this priority, which is intended to expand access to a UW–Madison education while leveraging
42 new modes of delivery to engage with students throughout their lives, is the centralized Online
43 Learning Initiative, also known as UW–Madison Online. UW–Madison Online increases
44 opportunities for students who cannot attend college in person and want to balance work,

1 family, or other obligations. This institutional priority has fostered increased coordination of
2 online learning activities, support for advising new student audiences, recalibrated conversations
3 about transfer credit and transfer articulation, and otherwise set the stage for consideration of
4 new degree opportunities for undergraduate education. The College of Letters & Science was
5 invited to re-envision liberal arts education in service to the audiences identified in the UW-
6 Madison Online initiative; the response was to propose a new kind of degree for L&S, designed
7 to better serve the needs of the college, university, and system. The BLS degree, as envisioned, is
8 intended to be completed with one of several “applied” majors designed to help students
9 integrate prior course work with current college study, informed by their lived experiences. The
10 Major in Applied Social Science will be the first of these programs.

11
12 The BLS degree with a major in Applied Social Science will contribute directly to the
13 mission of the UW System by supporting its fundamental commitment to public service through
14 education that improves the human condition. This program, in particular, not only promotes
15 the knowledge, skills, and abilities of baccalaureate-level liberal arts education, but also affords
16 students who previously “stopped out” or disconnected from higher education the opportunity
17 to complete their degrees, and thereby access the many opportunities available to college
18 graduates. Furthermore, studies fielded by the UW System demonstrate the impact
19 baccalaureate education has on the overall economic health of the state.⁶ The BLS is expected
20 not only to benefit individual students, but also to contribute to the good of the state of
21 Wisconsin.

22
23 Thus the BLS degree and companion Applied Social Science major are designed to
24 support the broad mission of UW-Madison to serve the state, and beyond, through the core
25 mission component and institutional purpose to “improve the quality of life for all.” The BLS and
26 its majors will contribute to the university’s broad and balanced array of academic programs;
27 promote and strengthen interdisciplinary study; and serve society by meeting continuing
28 educational needs. The major in Applied Social Science will strengthen students’ cultural
29 understanding, their understanding of social, political, economic, and technological change
30 through research and service. The programs reflect appreciation for, and commitment to, the
31 ideals of a pluralistic, multiracial, open, and democratic society. The ability to flexibly transcend
32 disciplinary boundaries is essential to the study of the liberal arts and sciences. Thus these
33 programs can be seen an evolution of the University’s educational offerings using modern
34 technology to broaden access to “the beneficent influence” of the university, to improve the
35 lives of people living and working in and beyond Wisconsin.

36
37 The 2020-25 Strategic Framework (<https://strategicframework.wisc.edu/>) advances UW-
38 Madison’s vision to be a model public university in the 21st century. The five priorities include
39 “Excellence in Teaching and Educational Achievement: Provide access to a world-class,
40 affordable educational experience.” A featured initiative under this priority, which is intended to

⁶ <https://news.wisc.edu/uw-system-9-5-billion-economic-impact/>
<https://www.wisconsin.edu/news/archive/uw-system-is-major-driver-of-the-wisconsin-economy/>

1 expand access to a UW–Madison education, leveraging new modes of delivery to engage with
2 students throughout their lives, is the centralized Online Learning Initiative. The Online Learning
3 Initiative supports faculty and instructional designers to develop and deliver high quality online
4 courses and programs at all levels and is especially focused on launching a suite of fully online
5 degree programs. The BLS degree and the Applied Social Science major are part of this initiative.
6

7 From a recruiting perspective, UW Madison will focus on adult learners with some
8 college, with a supplementary focus on those with a Badger connection. This will include former
9 students who left with credits but did not complete their degree (approximately 3000 such
10 individuals from entrance cohorts in the past 15 years) and individuals who aspire to an
11 association with UW-Madison. Enrollment in the suite of online programs aims for 1,000
12 students by Fall 2023 with substantial growth into the future.
13

14 Support has been expressed by the L&S Curriculum Committee and Academic Planning
15 Council, as well as by...
16

17 **University Program Array**

18 The BLS degree will complement the array of 64 baccalaureate degree/majors offered
19 by the College of Letters & Science. These programs serve students seeking a traditional
20 “science intensive” BS or “language, humanities, and humanistic social sciences intensive” BA,
21 coupled with majors that require deep study in a discipline, often preparatory to application
22 to further advanced study in a field. L&S programs are supported by more than 800 faculty
23 and nearly 500 instructional staff, many of whom will also participate in the proposed
24 programs. None of the existing BA/BS programs can be earned online, and that will continue.
25 The BLS and Applied Social Science major will provide a part-time, online route to a liberal arts
26 degree at UW-Madison.
27

28 **Other Programs in the University of Wisconsin System**

29 Colleagues across the UW System have already been extending access to
30 baccalaureate-level online education to citizens of the state, nation, and world, and have
31 pursued a variety of avenues for doing so. The UW Extended Campus website lists 72
32 baccalaureate-level programs available online. Many of these programs focus on specific
33 careers or career pathways (e.g., nursing, business administration, criminal justice), while
34 others are technical in nature. Some are online versions of their residential bachelor of arts or
35 science degree programs (with modification to allow for online completion) coupled with
36 discipline-focused undergraduate majors (e.g., UW- Milwaukee’s BA/BS which can be
37 completed with History, Political Science, Jewish Studies, Psychology, or Sociology majors).
38

39 Five UWs offer an undergraduate program in social sciences with the same CIP code as
40 proposed for the UW-Madison Applied Social Science major (45.01010): UW-Platteville
41 (BA/BS-Social Studies); UW-River Falls (BA/BS-Social Studies, Broad Field); UW-Stout (BS-
42 Applied Social Science); UW-Superior (BA/BS-Social Studies, Broad Area); UW-Whitewater

1 (BSE-Social Studies, Broad Field). These offerings are on-campus programs and none are
2 combined with the BLS. UW-Eau Claire offers the BLS degree combined with a Liberal Studies
3 major (CIP code 24.0101); this degree is offered on campus. UW-Oshkosh had offered a
4 similar program combination online; however, UW-Oshkosh is in the process of seeking
5 permission to change the degree to a Bachelor of Professional Studies.
6

7 During the NOI process, UW-Stout expressed concern regarding the potential for overlap
8 between the Madison and Stout programs; a careful comparison of the two programs and the
9 context and manner in which they are offered helped to allay these concerns. The UW-Stout
10 program is distinctive, serves an important student population on-campus (vs. online) offering
11 focused study in social science disciplines. It fills a unique niche in the array of UW programs.
12 The UW-Madison BLS has a different audience, mission, and mode of delivery: it will be
13 offered online to students who left college without degrees, and rather than a tightly defined
14 program, it will accept a generous amount of transfer credit. The current proposal has been
15 revised to clarify and reflect these distinctions.
16

17 As a result of these inquiries, three programs were identified that, like the proposed program,
18 are general liberal studies programs, offered in online/distance formats, and designed to
19 serve the adult, degree-completing audience:

- 20 - UW-Whitewater offers an online BA/BS degree with a Liberal Studies major; students
21 complete requirements across broad categories encompassing skills, content, and
22 experience (internships and travel study) (\$371 per credit for WI resident⁷)
- 23 - UW-Parkside offers an online degree completion BA with a major in Liberal Studies that is
24 designed as a "transfer friendly" (\$375 per credit⁸)
- 25 - UW-Oshkosh offers a Bachelor in Liberal Studies (to become Bachelor of Professional
26 Studies) with new majors (\$360 per credit⁹)
- 27 - Each of these delivers a general program of study of contemporary issues,
28 communication skills, leadership skills, and (as UW- Oshkosh's program notes) "work-life
29 balance in American society." Program materials emphasize learners who are balancing
30 life demands outside of school. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics
31 suggests programs of this type have strong demand: they awarded a combined total of
32 90 degrees in 2018-19.
33

34 The proposed UW-Madison online BLS with the Applied Social Science major has features that
35 distinguish it from other programs:

- 36 -Leverages UW-Madison brand-recognition in Wisconsin, nationally, and internationally
37 as part of the broader Online Learning Initiative that has the goal of expanding access

⁷ <https://www.uww.edu/online/bachelors/liberal-studies#online-tuition>

⁸ <https://www.uwp.edu/live/offices/cashiersoffice/fall-tuition-fees-undergrad.cfm>

⁹ <https://uwosh.edu/online/online-degree-programs/liberal-studies/>

- 1 through online programming as identified in the 2020-25 strategic plan
2 -Offers a degree/major combination not offered by other UWs or through UW-
3 Extended Campus
4 -Builds on an existing and growing set of online course offerings at UW-Madison, many
5 of which have been designed for the Online Learning Initiative, and leverages the
6 expertise of UW-Madison's faculty from a range of disciplines
7 -Allows students to engage with a major research university from geographically
8 dispersed locations and provides a route to a degree for adults with some college
9 credit, especially those with existing UW-Madison connections including prior
10 enrollment without completion
11 -Connects graduates to a world-wide alumni network of more than 400,000 Badger
12 graduates
13 -Is priced above other UW programs at \$600 per credit
14
15

16 **Need as Suggested by Current Student Demand**

17
18

19 The need for such programs and their economic impact has been well studied in higher
20 education. In times of economic recession, employers prefer to hire employees with
21 postsecondary degrees: having a baccalaureate degree therefore has an immediate impact on
22 opportunities for these individuals. In addition, a well-educated workforce is tied to the
23 economic prosperity of the state and of the region, and that access to baccalaureate education
24 is a lever that can address barriers to economic equity, stability, and mobility. Analyses
25 conducted by Entangled Solutions, an education industry consulting group, for the university
26 have identified over 800,000 Wisconsin residents with some college but no degree¹⁰, with over
27 39,000 individuals realistically motivated to complete a baccalaureate degree. Wisconsin's
28 neighboring states have 28.6 million residents with an adult education population profile like
29 those in Wisconsin; the addressable market of Upper Midwest residents with some college credit
30 but no bachelor's degree is approximately 11 million. Online undergraduate degree programs
31 provide access for these students, particularly working adults, and those with caregiving
32 responsibilities. A market analysis found that generalist "liberal studies" degree/major (coupled
33 with majors in various areas of the Social Sciences) have a large and growing market.
34

35 This proposal seeks to develop programming to serve this group of students, which is
36 currently not present at UW-Madison: students who seek to return to college to complete
37 degrees after a (usually lengthy) period "stopped out," during which time their initial aspirations
38 and needs may have changed. Indeed, many such students seek to complete a degree with
39 content applicable to employment or to enrich their curiosity and personal interests. If these
40 students were former UW-Madison students, current policy for readmission allows reentry only

¹⁰ Lumina Foundation. 2016. "Stronger Nation: Wisconsin Brief and U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

1 into the degree/major programs they may have left years earlier, regardless of their current
2 goals. If these students are new to UW-Madison, transfer admission allows re-entry, but only a
3 limited number of programs are available online for these students. This program will afford
4 these students a viable re-entry point to a college degree, with programming designed to
5 leverage what they may have learned in the meantime.

6
7 IPEDS data summarized in 2018 by Entangled Solutions also demonstrate demand from
8 this student population for interdisciplinary liberal studies programming. Peer programs in
9 adjacent degree platforms include 2,400 enrollments in the online BA in Liberal Arts at Arizona
10 State University, 1,400 enrollments in the BA in Liberal Arts at Northern Arizona, 1,200
11 enrollments in the BS in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Massachusetts, and 300 in
12 General Studies at the University of Indiana. The University of Pennsylvania also selected a
13 program in Applied Arts and Sciences for its first online bachelor's degree offering in 2019.
14 IPEDS data for its launch in Fall 2019 indicated that just over 300 undergraduate students were
15 enrolled in fully online programs at Penn, and in total they project steady state of 2,000.

Interdisciplinary Studies

Active programs: 1,830

Active online programs: 398 (22%)

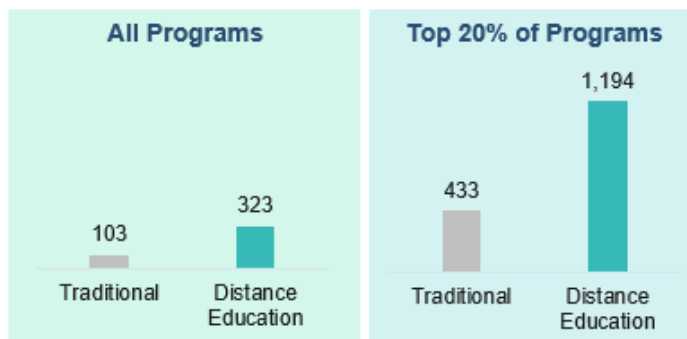
Median enrollments in programs that offer an online option:

- All programs: 92
- Top 20% of programs: 1,194

Enrollment range for top 10% of programs: 868 to 5,684

Guidance for the University of Wisconsin: 75 to 800

Average Program Enrollments



Source: IPEDS; Burning Glass. CIP codes 24.0101, 24.0102, 30.0000, and 30.9999. Enrollment estimates for Distance Education programs include both on-ground and online modalities. Methodology follows enrollment guidance from Entangled Solutions.

16
17
18
19
20
21

Need as Suggested by Market Demand

In 2016, the Institute for Research in Higher Education predicted that by 2020, 62% of

1 jobs in Wisconsin would require a postsecondary degree¹¹. Report after report confirms that
 2 higher education is tied to the economic prosperity of the state and of the region, and that
 3 access to baccalaureate education is a lever that can address barriers to economic equity,
 4 stability, and mobility^{12 13 14}. Analyses conducted for the university identified over 800,000
 5 Wisconsin residents with some college but no degree, with over 39,000 individuals realistically
 6 motivated to complete a baccalaureate degree. Wisconsin’s neighboring states have 28.6
 7 million residents with an adult education population profile like those in Wisconsin. The
 8 addressable market of Upper Midwest residents with some college credit but no bachelor’s
 9 degree is approximately 11 million. Online undergraduate degree programs provide access for
 10 these students, particularly working adults, and those with caregiving responsibilities.

11
 12 Burning Glass data collected on this market in 2021 reveals that in the state of Wisconsin
 13 between March 2020 and February 2021, over 18,000 job postings required a bachelor’s degree
 14 in liberal studies and the social sciences. Regional growth in the sector is expected above the
 15 national average, at a rate of 9% per year (Table 1). In fact, many of the mostly highly sought-
 16 after skills in the regional labor market require application of the social sciences.
 17 Communication, teamwork and collaboration, organization, building effective relationships,
 18 planning, research, writing and problem-solving are all in the top baseline skills required by
 19 employers.. Additional skills in social media and data are considered competitive advantages in
 20 the job market.

21
 22 Table 1. Total Projected Wisconsin Employment Estimate for Bachelor of Liberal Studies and
 23 Equivalent Degrees (Burning Glass)

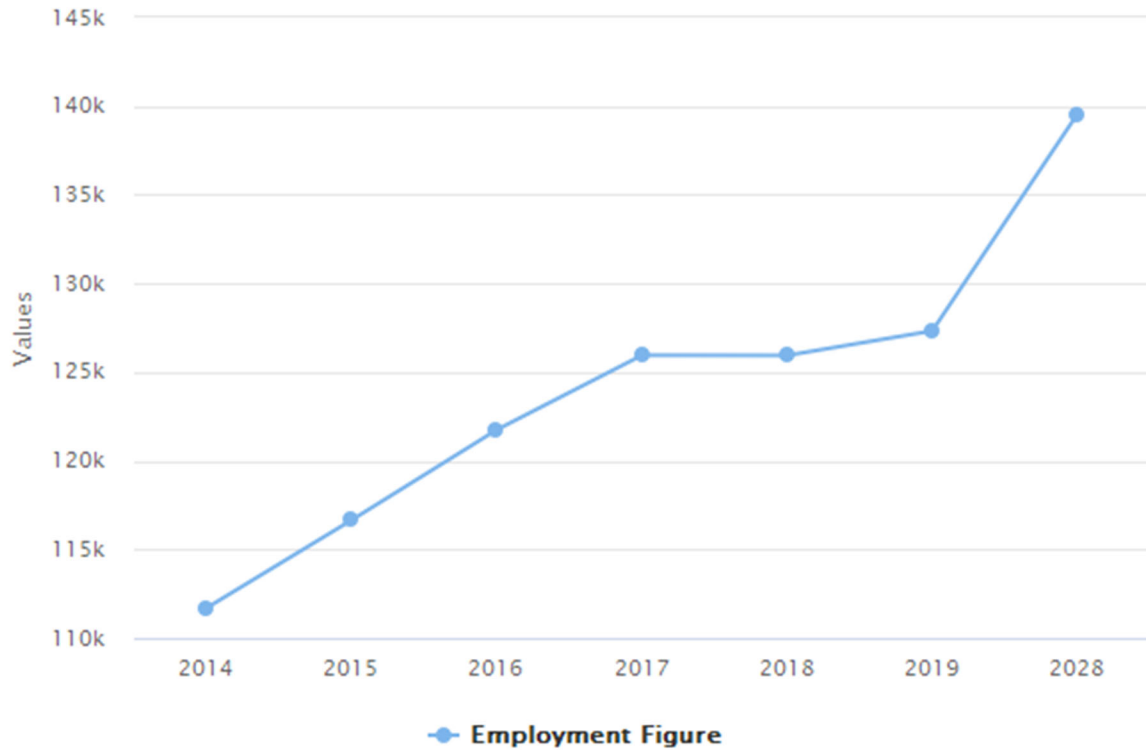
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2028
Wisconsin Employment	111,700	116,660	121,750	125,950	125,940	127,321	139,548

¹¹ Institute for Research on Higher Education. 2016. College Affordability Diagnosis: Wisconsin. Philadelphia, PA: Institute for Research on Higher Education, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania. <http://www2.gse.upenn.edu/irhe/affordability-diagnosis>.

¹² Berger, Noah and Peter Fisher. 2013 (August 22). “A Well-Educated Workforce is Key to State Prosperity.” Retrieved from the Economic Policy Institute website: <https://www.epi.org/publication/states-educationproductivity-growth-foundations/>

¹³ Bernstein, Jared and Ben Spielberg. 2015 (June 5). “Inequality Matters.” Retrieved from *The Atlantic* website:<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/06/what-matters-inequality-or-opportunity/393272/>

¹⁴ Chetty, Raj, John Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, Nicholas Turner, and Danny Yagan. 2017. “Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility. Retrieved from the New York Times website: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility/>.



1
2
3
4
5
6

Total conferrals for Liberal Studies majors from Wisconsin institutions also remain small (Table 2) and well below market saturation.

Table 2. IPEDs Conferral Data for BLS, Wisconsin Institutions (2019)

Institution Type	Conferrals (2019)	Market Share (%)
Private	8	12.31%
Public	57	87.69%

7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18

Careers for graduates with BLS MASS are embedded in multiple industries, including manufacturing, administrative, professional, scientific and technical services, and finance and insurance. Top positions identified in Burning Glass include:

- Non-technical Sales Representative, Account Manager/Representative
- Paralegal/Legal Assistant, Legal Support Specialist
- Recruiter, Human Resource Assistant
- Policy Analyst, Social Science Researcher
- Supply Chain Manager
- Technical Writer, Writer, Copywriter, Proofreader, Editor, Reporter
- Enrollment/Admission Counselor, Enrollment/Eligibility Specialist, Residential Assistant/Advisor

1
2
3
4

- Insurance Agent

1 **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION TO BE SUBMITTED:**

2
3 Three additional documents must be submitted along with the Request for Authorization to
4 Implement a Degree narrative to apfa@uwsa.edu. These additional documents are:

- 5 • Cost and Revenue Projections Spreadsheet (Excel format, portrait view)
- 6 • Cost and Revenue Projections Narrative (Word format)
- 7 • University Letter of Commitment (PDF format)

8
9 **Cost and Revenue Projections Spreadsheet** – Additional Document #1 (Excel format, portrait
10 view)

11
12 Please utilize the spreadsheet template located at the Academic Program Planning webpage at
13 <https://www.wisconsin.edu/program-planning/>. The provost and chief business officer must sign
14 the cost and revenue projections spreadsheet. The submitted document must be clean and
15 readable. Avoid submitting scanned documents.

16
17 **Cost and Revenue Projections Narrative** – Additional Document #2 (Word format)

18
19 Please utilize the Word template located at the Academic Program Planning webpage at
20 <https://www.wisconsin.edu/program-planning/>.

21
22 The Cost and Revenue Projections Narrative supports the completion and discussion of the Cost
23 and Revenue Projections spreadsheet document. Together, the budget spreadsheet and
24 narrative illustrate the financial sustainability of the proposed program and document how
25 projected revenues will offset the program costs over a five-year period.

26
27 **University Letter of Commitment** – Additional Document #3 (PDF format)

28
29 The letter of commitment is signed by the university's provost. The letter should be addressed
30 to the President of the UW System (copied to the Associate Vice President of Academic
31 Programs & Faculty Advancement) and affirm that:

- 32 • The program has been designed to meet the university's definition and standards of
33 quality, and will make a meaningful contribution to the university's select mission, overall
34 academic plan, and academic degree program array;
 - 35 • There is university-wide support for the program, including university governance
36 approval;
 - 37 • The necessary financial and human resources are in place and/or have been committed
38 to implement and sustain the program; and
 - 39 • Program evaluations are in place.
- 40