

Proposal to Change an Academic Program

Adding an Online Version of an Existing Program

at

The University of Minnesota, Crookston

Bachelor of Manufacturing Management

for

Online Delivery

Prepared and Submitted by:

The University of Minnesota, Crookston

Business Department

and

Center for Adult Learning

University of Minnesota, Crookston

2900 University Avenue

Crookston, MN 56716

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Bachelor of Manufacturing Management- Online

Executive Summary

Launched in 1998, the Bachelor of Manufacturing Management degree was UMC's first degree program designed specifically for students who had already completed at least some college and were already in the workforce. Most classes are offered in the traditional classroom-based format, but not on the UMC campus. Instead, students attend class at their place of work or at one of six collaborating two-year colleges. While enrollment in the degree program has shown steady growth, it remains inaccessible to many learners, particularly in rural areas, whose (1) workplace is not convenient to a partner college and/or (2) work schedules cannot accommodate fixed-time, site-based classes.

In the fall of 2004, the University of Minnesota, Crookston received approval from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools to offer the first fully online baccalaureate degree in the University of Minnesota system. The Bachelor of Applied Health, even with limited marketing, has shown substantial enrollment growth and is attracting students from across Minnesota and beyond. UMC now proposes to use the same model (strong academics, effective interactive learning technologies, superior student support services) to put the Bachelor of Manufacturing Management degree online.

The proposed online Bachelor of Manufacturing Management supports UMC's mission and direction. Increasing enrollment and revenue by expanding online programming has been identified as a high priority in campus strategic positioning documents and in budget and compact discussions with the Office of the Vice President for System Administration. High quality online programs support the University's commitment to access for diverse and deserving learners by reaching the previously underserved populations constrained by location, necessities of work and family, and/or other personal circumstances.

The relative prosperity of a community, region, and state correlates strongly with the post-secondary educational attainment of its population. Consequently, access to higher education, particularly for non-traditional learner groups, must be part of any strategy for sustainable state-wide economic development. Online programs help assure such access. The University of Minnesota, Crookston is committed to excellence in high-value polytechnic undergraduate education, and to preparing students for rewarding careers and responsible citizenship in an economically and socially interdependent world. Moreover, the Bachelor of Manufacturing Management program addresses the most critical factors in sustainable economic development – creating an educated workforce and supporting a critical mass of talented business builders – and it does so expressly for the manufacturing sector, an especially important component of the rural economy.

Through online programs, UMC will leverage its national reputation as a leader in teaching with technology to provide that access and meet the rapidly growing demand for flexible learning options now being driven by shifting demographics and employment patterns. Superior academic quality in high-value/high demand fields and exceptional service will create a comparative advantage for all UMC online degree programs.

Mission; Priorities; and Interrelatedness

The existing bachelors degree in Manufacturing Management is delivered off-site, but in a traditional face-to-face format. This change, to make the program available online, supports the University of Minnesota, Crookston's strategic priorities to (1) align academic programs and administrative processes with the University of Minnesota system and (2) to support the University's Land Grant mission through undergraduate degrees that combine theory, practice, and experimentation in a technologically rich environment.

This proposal fits the mission of the University and the campus. Online degree programs like the Bachelor of Manufacturing Management provide clear public evidence of the University's commitment to enrich "all people" through understanding, and to share "knowledge through education for a diverse community."

The University of Minnesota, founded in the belief that all people are enriched by understanding, is dedicated to the advancement of learning and the search for truth; to the sharing of this knowledge through education for a diverse community; and to the application of this knowledge to benefit the people of the state, the nation, and the world.

- University of Minnesota Board of Regents (1994)

Online learning, because it is so well-suited to working people seeking to improve their knowledge and skills, is a particularly good fit with UMC's industry-influenced curriculum, career-oriented programs, and polytechnic mission:

The University of Minnesota, Crookston (UMC) is integral to the University's statewide land grant mission. The college provides its unique contribution through polytechnic programs that combine theory, practice, and experimentation in a technologically rich environment. UMC connects its teaching, research, and outreach to serve the public good.

Investment in and growth of online and lifelong learning programs is a major campus initiative. The FY 2006 compact states:

UMC will leverage its national reputation as a leader in teaching with technology to meet the rapidly growing demand for online learning and other flexible learning options. Superior academic quality, high-value programs, and exceptional service will create comparative advantage. Wider access to a University of Minnesota education will support regional economic development.

The online manufacturing management degree does not expand the curriculum, it expands access to learning by reaching learners in Minnesota and beyond who are place-bound or who are otherwise precluded from participating in traditional site-based education. Similarly, it does not alter the mission of the institution, but extends its impact by assuring greater access to the unparalleled value of a University of Minnesota education for all constituencies of the campus and the University.

UMC believes talented and motivated learners across the state deserve access to Minnesota's highest quality educational system. We further believe that access ought not be restricted by time, limited by place, or precluded by the necessity of work or obligation to family. UMC envisions online programming as an integrated strategy to serve more learners, address critical regional needs, and add value to public investment in the campus and the University.

Need and Demand

UMC's online programs are not intended to meet demand from students who already have access to the traditionally delivered degree. While online courses can occasionally provide a

desirable scheduling option for traditional students, the primary demand (and growth opportunity) for the distance degree is from students who are not now at UMC and do not have the option of coming here in the future.

The table below shows the increase in student credit hours delivered online at UMC over the past three years:

Year	Online student credit hours	Growth from prior year
2003-04	2,718	43%
2004-05	2,842	5% ¹
2005-06	3,370 ²	19%

1. Modest growth realized despite MnSCU termination of NTC contract.
2. Actual fall '05 enrollment, plus projection for spring '06.

Nationwide, the demand for online learning is growing rapidly:

- A Chronicle of Higher Education article (12/13/05) projects that online-education revenues will increase by 33 percent a year for the next several years.
- The Sloan-C consortium, a group of higher education institutions involved in online education, reports that online enrollment grew from 1.9 million students in fall 2003 to over 2.6 million in fall 2004, with growth expected to accelerate in the coming years.
- Apollo Group Inc. (University of Phoenix) estimated 2005 online degree enrollments would grow in excess of 40% over the prior year, with estimated revenue of \$2.27 billion for the fiscal year.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/phoenix/stories/2004/08/23/daily37.html>

UMC is poised to capture a share of this market. However, the potential for significant growth depends on offering online degree programs, not individual courses. UMC's Center for Adult Learning found that its online learners are mostly female, over 30 years old, and in the workforce. They have already earned a significant number of college credits and are pursuing a bachelors degree, rather than taking courses for personal interest or for a specific job need. Offering degree programs online, rather than selected courses, fits this demographic.

Although the site based program has shown steady growth since it was established in 2000, and currently enrolls 83 students, the online version will reach many more learners in Minnesota and beyond who are place-bound or who are otherwise precluded from participating in traditionally delivered education.

Comparative Advantage

The online learning market is currently populated with a wide range of education providers. UMC has a competitive advantage because the campus is already recognized as a national leader in teaching with technology and because it is part of the University of Minnesota system. The campus is well positioned to carry the University's commitment to excellence to the online market and meet the rapidly growing demand for rigorous academic content, effective learning, and exceptional student service.

UMC's comparative advantages in the development and delivery of online programs include:

- The campus has the longest track record in the nation as a "laptop" university; Technology-enhanced teaching and learning is firmly embedded in campus culture.

- The Bachelor of Manufacturing degree is unique in Minnesota and demand is already established as a successful program for off-site, face-to-face delivery. Although the program is only five years old, it currently ranks third in enrollment among UMC's 21 programs, behind business management and natural resources. Three students graduated with the Bachelor of Manufacturing Degree in its first year (2000-01). That number grew to 18 in 2004-05.
- The Center for Adult Learning and UMC's academic departments have established collaborative systems and processes to ensure quality and integrity.
- The campus has made significant investment in technology infrastructure and support services over the past decade; the capacity to serve online learners already exists.
- The campus is adopting all "best practices" for online learning articulated by the Higher Learning Commission, and is now preparing documentation for that body requesting approval to offer all existing programs online.
- UMC's successful development and deployment of the first fully online bachelors degree (Applied Health) in the University system demonstrates market viability and campus capacity to deliver.

If endorsed by the Board of Regents, this program and the proposed Bachelor of Science in Business in online format, together with the existing Bachelor of Applied Health online program, will lend strength to UMC's request for blanket approval from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) for online programs. The request will be made in conjunction with HLC's site visit for continuing accreditation, scheduled for April 2006. Blanket approval is essential to UMC's competitiveness since MnSCU and North Dakota higher education institutions already have such approval.

Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Use of Resources

This change proposal will improve curricular efficiency and can be implemented within the current budget framework of the campus. Individual courses in the manufacturing curriculum have already been developed for online delivery and are currently in the curriculum. While students are excited to have these courses available, many (along with their employers) indicate strong interest in having access to the degree, not just the courses.

UMC's compact objectives and initiatives are informed by the campus strategic positioning process. They strengthen the mission and support growth into the future by confronting fiscal realities, focusing on quality and efficiency, creating unique comparative advantage, enhancing academic synergies, and adding significant value in return for the public dollars invested. Online programs will expand enrollment and generate tuition revenue to reduce overall cost per credit hour delivered. Tuition revenue will support program operations and future investment in program growth and continuous improvement.

Additional efficiencies include:

- UMC has made significant investments in faculty development, both in the effective use of technology and the pedagogical expertise necessary for student success online. This program and others will increase the return on that investment by expanding the audience of learners served.
- UMC's Instructional Technology Center has been helping faculty integrate technology into their teaching for more than ten years. (<http://www.crk.umn.edu/technology/itc/index.htm>). A variety of faculty development opportunities have been and will continue to be supported, and UMC's web development and computer help desk staff, along with the Center for Adult Learning personnel, provide on-demand technical support for faculty and students.

- UMC is investing in targeted market development for the Bachelor of Applied Health degree to generate sustained enrollment growth and create a significant new revenue stream. Expanding the number of online programs available will improve efficiency of and returns on marketing dollars expended.
- Innovative instructional partnerships with community and technical colleges (and other U of MN campuses/colleges) efficiently expand UMC's market reach by leveraging the expertise and capacities of other institutions.

Program Quality and Evaluation

Distance courses are taught by regular UMC faculty with an interest in teaching online. No unwilling faculty member is required to teach online. Online teaching can be part of the regular load or offered as an overload. Adjunct instructors are hired when necessary; the academic credentials required are the same as for classroom instructors, but online adjunct instructors must also have additional technology skills. In order to assure academic quality and integrity, the academic department retains authority for the evaluation and hiring of online instructors.

Like the existing manufacturing management degree, the online degree has a liberal education core of 19 credits, a program core of 43 credits, and 58 credits of evaluated and approved transfer credits and/or program electives in business and technology. A total of 120 credits are required for graduation. See: <http://www.umcrookston.edu/academics/Bus/BSManufacturing/>. The learning outcomes, both at the courses and program level, are defined by faculty and do not differ between modes of delivery.

This proposal has been considered and approved by the faculty of the Business Department (March 22, 2004), the campus Curriculum Committee (March 31, 2004), and by the UMC Faculty Assembly (April 16, 2004).

Recent discussion with representatives of the Higher Learning Commission has resulted in their recommendation that UMC immediately move to secure HLC approval of this program. Upon acceptance of this proposal by the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, UMC will initiate that process. Because UMC is adopting all of the Higher Learning Commission's "Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs," timely approval is anticipated. The Best Practices are divided into five separate components: (1) Institutional Context and Commitment, (2) Curriculum and Instruction, (3) Faculty Support, (4) Student Support, and (5) Evaluation and Assessment.

The faculty of the University of Minnesota, Crookston assures academic quality and leads efforts to improve student learning for all UMC programs, regardless of delivery mode. Policies and procedures for faculty input and academic oversight for online courses and programs are the same as or comparable to those for site-based instruction.

In general, distance learners represent a different demographic profile than their campus-based counterparts. They often have different motivations, different life circumstances, and different priorities and expectations than the on-campus population. However, student learning is the primary purpose of higher education, and that purpose is preserved in the online environment. Those institutions that meet the unique needs of these learners will ultimately succeed by earning their gratitude as students and their loyalty as alumni. In the online arena, "quality" means *quality of the product* and *quality of the experience*. UMC understands that online learners place high value on quality services, and the Center for Adult Learning is already focused on building that comparative advantage.

Supplemental documentation specific to online courses/programs

1. Adequacy of facilities

The addition of a Bachelor of Manufacturing Management degree online represents no significant increase in demand on facilities.

2. Adequacy of technology infrastructure

The University of Minnesota, Crookston's Bachelor of Applied Health degree is the first undergraduate degree available online in the University of Minnesota system. The addition of a Bachelor of Manufacturing Management represents no significant increase in demand on technology infrastructure so the campus will realize a greater return on that investment.

3. Intellectual property (ownership of key content/courses and continuity of program if key faculty leave or are unavailable)

The faculty of the Business Department maintain academic oversight as they do with traditionally delivered degree programs. Other systems of and processes for campus governance also apply. The Center for Adult Learning assumes responsibility and exercises oversight for systems and processes particular to the delivery of distance education and to the service of distance students.

UMC's online courses use the University-supported WebCT course management system. The Center for Adult Learning, in collaboration with UMC's Instructional Technology Center, the appropriate academic department(s), and the University's Digital Media Center assure appropriate management and security of intellectual property. The Office of Academic Affairs, academic departments, and governance committees assure quality and integrity for all credits and degrees granted by the University of Minnesota, Crookston. Committees with a role in such oversight include

- Department Curriculum Committees
- Campus Curriculum Committee
- Faculty Assembly
- Campus Assembly
- Academic Standards and Policy Committee
- UMC Executive Committee
- All-Campus Advisory Committee
- Program Improvement Advisory Committees

The Center for Adult Learning, the appropriate academic department and pertinent campus committees are establishing guidelines for content development, course delivery, and future use. These guidelines are based on existing practices within the University of Minnesota's College of Continuing Education. They will respect academic freedom and faculty intellectual property while they assure the institution's right to continue to serve all students should a faculty member depart or be otherwise unavailable. In terms of academic content and student learning outcomes, UMC views distance education no differently than site-based education.

4. Adequacy of faculty professional development opportunities and access to technology support resources

UMC provides appropriate training for faculty who teach in distance education programs. The mission of the Instructional Technology Center (ITC) is to assist faculty in the integration of technology into their teaching; it has been doing so successfully for at least ten years. In addition, UMC's web development and computer help desk staff, along with the Center for Adult Learning personnel, provide on-demand technical support for faculty and students.

Extensive faculty development opportunities have been, are, or will be supported by (1) internally funded “mini-grants”, (2) the Faculty Development fund, (3) University of Minnesota Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) grants, and (4) compact dollars. In addition, UMC has recently allocated a percentage of online tuition collections to the Center for Adult Learning for reinvestment in faculty-led course and program development.

5. Adequacy of student support services including eligibility for student healthcare and financial aid, access to library, bookstore, placement, and counseling resources, availability of online advising and technology support (“helpline”)

The institution has provided adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the programs, including: admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, placement, and counseling. Online students are exempt from UMC’s requirement for hospitalization insurance. UMC’s FY 06 compact will direct additional investment to support excellence in student services, particularly those of special importance to online students.

UMC has initiated the Enterprise System Project and the One Stop Student Services Center to provide for comprehensive online interactive web access to registration, records, grades, admissions, financial aid, and UMC’s other student services. This system serves both traditional and distance students.

Online students can access all necessary information and services by telephone, e-mail, and via the web.