

# One-Time Non-Base Investment Proposal: Step 2

*(Please limit the proposal narrative and attachments to 10 pages)*

Proposal Name: The President's Three Year Tuition Guarantee for Three Year Degree Programs

## 1. Provide a description of the project being proposed. (5 points)

This is a proposal to offer a path to finishing a baccalaureate degree in three years instead of four to highly qualified high school graduates who come to us with a good number of AP and/or PSEO credits.

The proposal does not seek to reduce the number of credits necessary to graduate, nor the academic rigor of the undergraduate experience; it merely proposes to map out the fastest way to graduation in a number of suitable degree programs for highly motivated high-ability students, and to provide some limited support through priority registration and a small tuition perk.

A preliminary study of our undergraduate programs shows that about 60 of our 160 programs, especially those in the foundational fields in Arts and Humanities, Social and Behavioral Studies, and the Sciences which do not require extended internship, student teaching, or technical skill development, would be suitable. Some could also be combined with existing masters programs to a five-year path to the masters, e.g. in Math.

The President's Tuition Guarantee would guarantee the tuition level of the student's first year at Mankato for three years; it may also allow the students to sign for up to 20 credits a semester. Additionally or alternatively, we could offer priority registration. The advantage in these perks would be twofold: they make MSU more attractive for highly qualified students, and they would motivate interested students to self-identify so we can cohort-code and track them, and so that we can market and restrict the offer only to the best prepared students which we propose to identify as students with a GPA of 3.5 or higher (we do not want to create a trap for cash-strapped underprepared students that causes them to overload themselves and ultimately fail, not graduate faster).

## 2. Describe how the project will drive positive transformational change. (5 points)

The rising costs of education, low graduation rates, and sinking number of high school graduates and the associated enrollment pressures provide some of the most worrisome challenges in higher education today.

This proposal will address some of these aspects: It will be an offer to motivated students to come to MSU, instead of attempting to save on costs by going to a community college first or going to a different university where graduation in three years is not an institutionally supported goal.

Through the tuition and priority registration perks, it will provide an incentive to stay at MSU and finish the degree in a short time. An annual tuition review and two mandatory advising sessions, during the first and the third semester, will further help to retain and graduate these students successfully.

The recruitment of high-ability students has been identified as transformative because their drive and focus informs peer attitudes, their contributions to class interaction help and support weaker students, and their low reliance on advising and support services makes their education more cost-efficient, thus off-setting the more cost-intensive work with underrepresented student populations.

**3. Explain how the project addresses student recruitment, retention, persistence, and/or completion or one or more of the 12 Challenges. (10 points)**

**Recruitment:** A stand-out offer - financially and academically - for high-achieving high school graduates in the region: we will offer the most cost-efficient, highest-value baccalaureate available in the MnSCU system and indeed, in the region. Introducing this option will create a second great option in addition to the Honors Program for them, and it will provide us with excellent marketing opportunities and a welcome chance to show that we are an institution that offers high quality education while understanding and honoring families' financial commitments.

**Retention:** The combination of perks, support, and restrictions that characterizes this program will provide strong incentive for students to stay with us while transferring out would delay graduation and bring higher tuition costs. We would recruit students to begin with who would come to us with a high drive and ability to persevere and graduate in time, and who are ready to benefit of everything we have to offer.

**Persistence:** The three-year tuition guarantee provides a strong incentive to plan graduation seriously from day one. The resulting reduction in total tuition costs for the degree would be an incentive for students and their families to reduce outside work hours and focus on school work as much as possible; it will vastly improve the likelihood that students will continue for three years and stay with us for the entire time.

**Completion:** Likewise, priority registration and a tuition guarantee, which depend on maintaining a minimum GPA, provide a strong incentive to complete in a short time and with good grades. Shorter time to degree in this student population will statistically offset longer times to degree by more challenged student groups.

The 12 Challenges – 1, 2, 10:

**Challenge 1 – Budget:** Extremely competitively priced "four-year" degree; will address the rising costs of college.

While we invest some tuition dollars by allowing students to take up to 20 credits and to stay with the tuition rate of the year in which they started, we will also keep students here longer than they stay on average (considering our 60% two-year persistence rate) and earn tuition from them one or two years more. I think higher persistence rates will offset these investments, especially seeing that the 60 programs chosen for the three-year option will largely be housed in programs with lower upper-level enrollment.

**Challenge 2 – Enrollment Management, Graduation, Advising:** See above. Attractive recruitment offer for students who will not need a lot of academic support services and who are highly likely to graduate.

**Challenge 10 – Graduate Studies:** Can be expanded to include 5 year Masters programs. Math has offered to be a pilot and developed a 5 year Masters option.

**4. Describe the impact this project will have on students and/or others whom we serve. (10 points)**

The project is designed to persuade students to come to Mankato who, for academic or financial reasons, may otherwise have chosen to go to a different college or university. It will allow them to fully utilize PSEO and AP credit so most of them will need 112 or fewer credits to graduate; if they choose a major early, they will be able to earn these easily with six semester loads between 18 and 20 credits,

or six full semesters and one summer; there is some slack for repeated courses or changes in major. Priority registration will allow them to get into all the courses needed to graduate. The yearly tuition review will enforce the GPA standard and prevent that they pay for a fast degree with low grades. Advising holds for course registration for the second and fourth semester provide important check-in points to make sure all transfer credits have been applied correctly and the students are on track.

This project will also have an impact on other student groups because both faculty and peers benefit from goal-oriented, high-ability students in our classrooms and on campus, and because their lower reliance on support and services helps us offset some of the investments made into students facing higher challenges.

Further, it will help us strengthen our position as a leader in academic achievement and innovative practices in the system and the region.

**5. Identify the “SMART” outcomes for the project (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). (5 points)**

Offering small perks, such as a tuition guarantee or priority registration, allows us to identify, cohort-code, and monitor students on the three-year track. SMART outcomes will thus become measurable in

- recruitment numbers
- persistence rates
- graduation rates for these cohorts
- GPA averages for the cohort

For the implementation of the project itself, the following milestones provide SMART goals:

- Identification of suitable programs (2010-12)
- Layout of academic programs in three-year paths (2010-13)
- Creating policies and procedures for the three-year track (2010-13)
- Creating marketing materials (2012-13)
- Kick-off event and press release (late fall 2012)
- First cohort in 2013-14
- First cohort graduating in 2016

**6. Discuss what this project will do for the university that warrants the investment. (5 points)**

The University will benefit from having an alternative to the Honors Program for the recruitment of high-ability students as described above, for example by heightened peer standards and greater academic recognition.

It will further improve key measures on the institutional dashboard. For example, 200 students completing in 3 years with 2000 peers completing in 5 years will improve the average time to degree by 4% and the graduation rate by 4.5%.

Introducing and marketing the three-year degree will create positive “buzz”, highlighting us both as a destination for high-ability students and as a cost-efficient alternative both to the U and to the community college route that will set us apart from our competitors in the region. We will be leaders in academic quality and in innovative practices.

**7. Describe how the activities generated by this project would be sustained after one-time funding has ended, or if applicable, explain why the project does not need to be sustained. (5 points)**

Initial activities would get the program going, such as identifying and laying out paths for the chosen degree programs, approving policies and procedures, creating advising tools, creating a marketing campaign and promotional materials, recruiting the first cohorts.

The investment in terms of tuition dollars would be low because we already know that there are no major hikes in student tuition possible in the next years but assuming average hikes of 2% per year, we would give up 2% or about \$150 in the second year and 4% or \$300 in the third year, or a total of \$450.

On the other hand, over 40% of their cohort would have left the University by then so we would have 0% revenue from them; furthermore, these students would, by the nature of the degree programs chosen, not be in the high-cost hands-on professional degree programs (such as Nursing or Business) but in those upper-level courses in the traditional Liberal Arts disciplines in Arts and Humanities, SBS, and CSET which we offer for our majors anyway and where we traditionally have open seats every semester.

**8. Budget (5 points):**

Outline the funding requested using the categories listed below. Please identify any additional or matching funds that may available to support the project. Please note, budget revisions beyond 10% total change from the initial proposal require approval. Budget revisions of more than 20%, constitutes a major change in the project scope and will not be approved.

**Academic Affairs could work with a graduate student to coordinate the initial creation of uniform lay-outs and advising forms between departments, SRC's, the Registrar's Office, and Integrated Marketing/Admissions during FY 2012-13.**

**The first tuition-related effect would only occur in FY 2015, and only if there was a tuition increase that year.**

	FY12	FY 12 Matching Funds	FY13	FY 13 Matching Funds	FY14	FY14 Matching Funds
Personnel						
Unclassified Salary (in-load, overload)						
Classified Salary						
Fringe <sup>a</sup> (Classified and Unclassified)						
Graduate Assistant Salary			9,000			
Graduate Assistant Tuition Reduction/Waiver <sup>b</sup>			5,858			
Non-Salary						
Student Help						
Purchased Services/Travel Expenses			300			
Supplies and Materials			1,200			
Building Improvement/Construction Costs						
Equipment						
<b>Total Budget Requested</b>			<b>16,358</b>			

<sup>a</sup> Note: All current employees must be paid fringe benefits. Fringe should be estimated based on salary and position classification: Unclassified 30%, Classified 37%, Adjunct 7.65%.

<sup>b</sup> Estimated Tuition Reduction/Waiver for full-year enrollment: Masters \$5,858, Doctoral \$10,000.

**9. Identify any special considerations or needs required for this project (e.g. physical space, contractual obligations, IT support, or collaborations with/implications for other units). (5 points)**

The project would not affect approved academic curriculum as students would be required to fulfill all degree requirements as defined by the departments.

The project would be carried out in collaboration with department chairs or delegates and the SRC's. It would mainly include Liberal Arts and Sciences programs with a small internship, student teaching, or practical skill development component.

It would require some changes to our tuition structure and to the Priority Registration policy.

Admissions will create new online and print marketing tools to present this additional option to prospective high ability recruits.

Admissions and the Registrar will collaborate with Student Financial Services and Academic Affairs on cohort-coding and monitoring students who are part of the three-year track.

**10. Provide a project timeline outlining key tasks, milestones and dates for completion. (5 points)**

Academic Year 2010-2012

- Identification of suitable programs
- Commitments from department chairs
- List of participating 3-year bachelor (and 5-year master) programs
- Begin work on tuition structure change

Academic Year 2010-2013

- Creating and seeking approval for policies and procedures for the three-year track
- Creating marketing materials
- Creating, collecting, setting up in a uniform format of three-year pathways
- Kick-off events and press release in fall 2012, in time for 2013-14 recruitment

Academic Year 2013-14

First cohort admitted

Academic Year 2014-15

Tuition discount could kick in for first cohort if tuition increase was approved for that year.

Second cohort admitted

Academic Year 2015-16

Second tuition discount could kick in for first cohort if tuition was increased again for this year.

First numbers on two-year retention would be available

First cohort would graduate

Tuition discount could kick in for second cohort if tuition increase was approved for that year.

Third cohort recruited

Etc.

Academic Year 2016-17

First cohort retention numbers, two years worth of second-year retention numbers, three years worth of recruitment numbers, would be available; time to reassess and let the program run out or continue.