

Strategic Priority Funding Proposal

Full Proposal: Step 2

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

Proposal Name: Increase Off-campus Masters in Business Administration Enrollment

(Increase space between questions or add pages as needed)

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

This proposal requests funds to help **attain the goal of 100% increase in off-campus Masters in Business Administration (MBA) enrollment**. To achieve this goal, we must increase the visibility of and knowledge about the off-campus MBA (at 7700) program. Current analysis of the program shows several areas that must be strengthened to meet this goal.

According to AACSB (2012) there has been a 3.1% increase in the number of MBA generalist students enrolled 2008 to 2012. A greater increase, 26.7%, occurred in enrollment in specialized MBA programs. Prospective students are more concerned about the cost of an MBA program than ever before. Forty-nine percent (49%) of all prospective students cited the reservation that an MBA would require more money than they have available. The most noticeable change in factors in the MBA program selection process was an increase of 41% of prospective students who cited the cost of attendance as a major factor in the school selection process (Graduate Management Admissions Council (GMAC), 2012). There is clearly a demand for quality, value priced MBA programs. For MSU to grow its' MBA program, and increase enrollment by 100%, prospective students must be aware of the existence of our program, the quality of the program, and the competitive pricing of our program.

The *first*, and extremely important subject the proposal focuses on, is web presence of our MBA program. Currently the MSU MBA program has an extremely low web presence; we have very limited visibility when prospective students search for MBA programs online. Most prospective students search for an MBA program online. For example, MSU does not appear on the first three pages of search results when searching "MBA program Minneapolis" or "MBA program twin cities"; the majority of our competitors have achieved a higher level of visibility within these online searches. We have approximately 20 competitors offering similar MBAs in the twin cities area; that does not include the numerous 100% online MBA programs based in Minnesota and elsewhere. The importance of establishing a relevant web/social media presence cannot be overstated. It is a critical component to our success.

A survey of over 16,000 prospective business graduate students provides information as to why a university's web presence is a critical component to the success of an MBA program. "Overall, a school's website is consulted more often than 19 other sources of information examined, and is more influential when compared with various well known ranking publications" (GMAC, 2012). The same survey found that, of prospective students, 88% use school websites, 50% consult school admissions staff, and 47% read school printed publications or brochures. Prospective students also expect information on the school's website on job placements statistics and school rankings. "School websites were considered about 50 percent more influential than the most highly regarded school ranking publication" (GMAC, 2012).

The *second* topic addressed is the lack of relationships and communication between the MBA program and regional public and private organizations. We must increase awareness of our programs, our offerings, and our alums' success to attract and enroll increasing numbers of prospective students. There are over 50 large firms that offer tuition reimbursement to employees in the greater metropolitan twin cities area at this time (see Appendix A). It is likely that many more companies under 1500 employees also offer at least partial tuition reimbursement. The COB of MSU must make these firms and their eligible employees aware of our program if we are to increase our enrollment. An integral topic will be to provide information to educate prospective students and employers about the benefits of our MBA program, offered by an AACSB accredited college of business at an affordable cost.

These initiatives will be coordinated with Integrated Marketing (IM) and Extended Learning's (EL) strategies. We will work with EL using Hobson's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to track and communicate with prospective MBA students, follow current students, and generate marketing information. We will participate in IMs plan, including the Channel 7700 site and other initiatives in progress.

The basic strategy to improve the visibility and effectiveness of our web presence and to communicate with and build relationship with regional organizations will include:

- Engage a consultant/firm specializing in search engine optimization (SEO). This would include managing organic placement, paid online advertising, social networking presence, email marketing, general media visibility and contacts, and help us track our effectiveness online. They will help us determine an effective online strategy, monitor important lead conversion metrics, set generation stages as goals, and track our return on investment (RIO) for this phase of the project. (See additional details in Appendix B.)
- Hire a contract graduate recruiter part-time for one year to create a successful outreach program, to build and strengthen visibility, maintain communication with regional businesses and employers, organize focus groups, build an organizational contact database, and coordinate our use of the Customer Relationship Management software.
- Hold workshops and open houses at 7700 inviting prospective students and private and public organizational representatives where our programs will be described and the new telepresence will be demonstrated.

2. Identify the university strategic priority advanced by this project and explain the direct connection between the strategic priority and project. (20 points)

This project targets several strategic priorities that are discussed below.

Extended Learning Goals and Objectives

Goal 2. Increase enrollment in 100% on-line and off-campus offerings through the creation of marketing and data analysis tools while creating enhanced visibility of the home campus.

The 100% increase in enrollment is our overall goal and directly aligns with Goal 2.

Objective A. Develop and improve a process for tracking 100% on-line and off-campus students for gathering data to better recognize and influence enrollment trends.

The part time graduate recruiter will work with the Customer Relationship Management software, creating a specific graduate student (MBA) reference data base that can be used by anyone at MSU who is interested in this information. We currently have minimal data on our students.

Objective B. Work with integrated marketing, and academic departments/ program chairs and deans to collaborate on market research for the development of systematic competitive profiles and marketing plans for on-line and off-campus offerings

We have met with IM, and will continue to meet, to have input on the integrated plan for marketing the 7700 site. We will meet with others in EL and at 7700, as well as the COB dean and department chairs, to prevent duplication of efforts and increase effectiveness of all marketing pertaining to EL and 7700.

We will produce a directory of competitive profiles of other universities and colleges offering MBAs in our region that directly compete with us. This can serve as a resource for COB, IM, and other university constituents who need to utilize the information.

Objective E. Devise an external communication plan focused on external audiences.

We will develop a systematic plan to communicate information about our program to external public and private organizations. This plan will take into consideration the competitive profiles of other universities and colleges. It will also include creating a data base that contains organizations, contact individuals with names, phone, and email information. The data base will also incorporate contacts made—type of contact (e.g., phone or visit), date of contact, MSU contact person, results of contact, and other pertinent information such as tuition reimbursement policies and estimated prospective or interested students.

We will track our effectiveness by examining the contact data and matching it with student recruitment data. Different types of contact and their effectiveness will be analyzed to help us use our resources more effectively.

Goal 3. Build new and strengthen existing, partnerships with educational institutions, businesses, industries, non-profits and community groups and across greater Minnesota and beyond.

Objective B. Continue to seek out and build relationships with external public and private organizations, businesses, individuals, and groups for the purpose of expanding access to education opportunities leading to certificate and diploma programs.

As described in Goal 2, Objective E, above, our initiatives include building and strengthening partnerships with any and all groups who would benefit and have interest in our programs at 7700 to expand access to educational opportunities. Research shows that large corporations, smaller firms (due to the "sheer numbers"), and individuals can all be viable target segments (Geissler, 2007).

Additionally, we will hold focus group meetings to determine the level of interest and the subject content of specialized courses that lead to certificates in focused areas of business that we may partner with others to offer. This information will be included in the organizational contact database.

Goal 5. Assess the needs across greater Minnesota and beyond for credit and non-credit professional development opportunities and develop new programs and courses that align with identified needs.

Objective C. Become another support mechanism to the global solutions strategic effort by fulfilling identified non-credit needs of business and industry.

As part of our systematic communication of information about our programs to external public and private organizations, the focus groups will allow us to identify demand for non-credit professional courses. This will allow us to develop new initiatives that meet the needs expressed by our regional constituents.

3. Describe how the project will have a significant impact on students and deliver a significant return on investment to the university. (15 points)

Prospective students cannot benefit from our program if they are not aware of its existence or do not have adequate information to compare it to other available programs. Our program's price point is very competitive; empirically it appears to be the best value MBA program offered in the twin cities region for a program of its type. The decision to pursue an MBA, in most situations, involves complex buying behavior; MBA consumers proceed through a consumer decision-making process. Need recognition is the essential first step in this process, and the top three needs that MBA consumers report desiring to meet are career advancement, financial security, and job security (Dailey, 2007). This suggests that we develop a marketing strategy that provides clear, specific, and visible information around these three identified needs.

Students will be positively impacted by increased access to MBA education at an affordable price that will result from our amplified visibility. We will also work with students and their employers to maximize the effectiveness of any available tuition reimbursement programs that are applicable.

Public and private organizations we serve in Greater Minnesota will benefit from their employees having increased access to MBA education. Organizations will also benefit from less costly and more accurate access to program information. Prospective students, current students, and organizations will benefit from increased human capital and work skills that result from an MBA education. The inherent heterogeneity of human capital is one of the reasons that firms rely on the signal of an MBA (Opuko, 2008).

Our experience gained from the SEO and CRM technology initiatives can benefit numerous programs and will be shared in workshop settings and as otherwise requested. The project is designed to increase MBA enrollment at 7700, benefitting the university by increasing enrollment, visibility, and presence in the twin cities geographic area, and providing increased tuition revenues. The increased visibility and presence will benefit other programs at 7700.

4. Identify the specific measurable outcomes that will be used to measure the impact of the project. (10 points)

Intermediate outcomes relate to web presence—standard SEO measures plus competitive rankings.

One year outcomes will include:

- student contact database
- number of student contacts
- number of students who apply
- number of students admitted
- percentage increase in MBA enrollment
- public and private organizational contact database
- number of public and private organizational contacts
- development of new certificates
- media coverage achieved
- increased tuition revenues.

A final complete report will provide a complete analysis and the results of entire initiative.

5. Describe how the activities generated by this project will be sustained after strategic priority funding has ended, or if applicable, explain why the project does not need to be sustained. (5 points)

The activities generated by this project do not all need to be sustained. Once visibility is improved and partnerships and contacts are created, a recruiter will most likely not be necessary. The activity that will need to be maintained is the constant monitoring of web presence and effectiveness of internet marketing efforts. This can be partially funded by increased tuition dollars from increased student numbers. At this time, the MBA differential dollars fund a full time associate professor position along with fringe benefits, two graduate assistants, re-assigned time for the MBA director and basic marketing efforts on a yearly basis. There are not sufficient funds at this time to address these initiatives; we cannot rely on these funds for all that needs to be done. Increased enrollment will generate more funds in the future that may be used for the activities initiated in this proposal.

6. Provide a budget justification that explains why the funding being requested is required to support the project and outline the funding requested within the budget table below. (5 points)

Budget table:	FY14	FY14 Matching Funds
Personnel		
Unclassified Salary (in-load, overload)		
Classified Salary		
Fringe ^a (Classified and Unclassified)		
Graduate Assistant Salary		
Graduate Assistant Tuition Reduction/Waiver ^b		
Non-Salary		
Student Help		
Purchased Services/Travel Expenses		
Contracted Search Engine Optimization \$1,100/mo	\$13,000	
Plus \$2,500 initial startup fee	\$2,500	
Printing informational handouts	\$750	
Supplies and Materials		
Focus group meetings: room & refreshments; 5@\$325	\$1,675	
Building Improvement/Construction Costs		
Equipment		
Other (please specify)		
Contracted recruiter @ \$25/hr; 10 hrs/wk ^c	\$13,000	
Travel costs; mileage 5,000 miles @ \$0.485	\$2,425	
Misc. travel; e.g., parking	\$200	
Total Budget/Funding Requested	\$33,550	

^a 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%.

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

7. 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 part time recruiter position will not require dedicated office space at 7700. Rooms will be reserved for focus groups and meetings as needed at 7700. No long-term contractual obligations are expected as a result of engaging in this project. Collaboration with Extended Learning on the Customer Relationship Manager has already been addressed and approved by the Dean of Extended Learning; Becky Copper-Glenz. Any IT questions or support needed will go through the MBA Coordinator (CB Mahoney) at 7700 who will work closely with the part time recruiter on both databases.

8. Provide a project timeline outlining key tasks and dates for completion. (5 points)

Estimated Dates	Key Tasks	Milestones
July 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part time recruiter position filled. 	
July 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings held with MBA faculty, administrators, staff, and Integrated Marketing representatives to gather input on internet marketing needs including brand identification, clarifying issues of differentiation and integration. 	
July 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief report created on internet marketing needs identified and methods suggested. 	
August 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage a consultant/firm specializing in search engine optimization (SEO). Meet with consultant to identify strategy for meeting internet marketing needs. 	
August 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey creation completed. Survey goes out to business school faculty, administrators, and staff as well as Extended Learning faculty, administrators, and staff about business contacts with possible MBA interest to help populate organizational 	
September 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational contact database created using results from above survey and additional research by recruiter and 7700 MBA coordinator. 	
August 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruiter begins organizational contact meetings. These will be ongoing until project ends. 	
October 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information developed from first 2 months of organizational contact meetings used to identify topics for focus groups. Focus groups are held 	
November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group findings compiled into report. Focus group findings used to increase effectiveness of organizational contact 	
December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruiter and 7700 MBA recruiter work on development of student database in CRM software. 	
July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report completed. 	

References

Brown, J. (2012) Enrollment Trends at AACSB-Accredited Schools. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

Dailey L., Anderson M., Ingenito C., Duffy D., Krimm P., & Thomson S. (2006). Understanding MBA consumer needs and the development of marketing strategy. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 16(1), 143-158.

Geissler, GL. (2012) Using student input to develop a marketing strategy for an Executive MBA Program. *Journal of Case Studies in Education*, 1-14.

Graduate Management Admissions Council. MBA.COM Prospective Students Survey. 2012

Opoku, RA., Hultman, M., & Saheli-Sangari, E. (2008). Positioning in market space: The evaluation of Swedish universities' online brand personalities. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 18(1), 124–144

Appendix A

Companies offering at least partial tuition reimbursement that employ in Minnesota

3M	Land O' Lakes
ADP	Mayo Clinic System
Alliant Tech Systems	McAfee
Allianz Insurance	Medtox Scientific
Ameriprise Financial	Medtronic
Andersen Windows	Minnesota National Guard
Apple	Minnesota State Employees
Baxter	Nash Finch
Best Buy	Patterson Companies
Cargill	Piper Jaffrey
Carlson Companies	Polaris
Chase	Quicken Loans
Citigroup	Ramsey County
Datalink	Schwan Foods
Deloitte	St. Jude Medical
Donaldson	Supervalu
Ecolab	Target Corporation
Ecolab	TCF Financial
Ecolab	Thrivent Financial
Electromed Inc	Toro
General Mills	U.S. Bancorp
Grayco	United Health Care
HB Fuller	US Bancorp
Hennepin County	Valspar
Hormel Foods	Veteran's Administration
Hutchinson Technology	Wells Fargo
IBM	Xcel Energy
Imation	

Appendix B

To accomplish some of your initial goals, we would recommend a few core tactics:

1. Audit of existing site and web visibility. With this audit, we will better understand how your site is currently seen on the web and by search engines. We will make and execute recommendations based on this audit to help improve search rankings and visibility, which may include:

- Content modifications - e.g., keywords, page titles, tags, etc.
- Technology errors
- Listing opportunities
- Competitive analysis
- Paid opportunities (advertising)

2. Local visibility campaign - We will take advantage of opportunities provided by search engines and independent websites to display your product and link to the site.

3. Advertising - We will explore advertising campaigns with sites such as Google, Facebook and others and execute a campaign.

Before we begin any of the above tactics, we will follow our process of message development. We use a "creative blueprint" to identify audiences and tailor messages to those audiences. We will understand your key benefits so that we can build messages that set you apart from competitors in the marketplace. This is a necessary process to direct our recommendations on your site content and also build compelling messages for advertising and local listings.