

Date: October 16, 2024

Memorandum to: Alec Gallimore, Provost
Rebecca Stein, Chair, APC

From: Suzanne Barbour, Co-Chair, Master's Advisory Council
Brad Fox, Co-Chair, Master's Advisory Council

Reference: Master of Science in Business, Climate and Sustainability

On October 10, 2024, the Master's Advisory Council discussed the proposed Master of Science in Business, Climate and Sustainability. This joint degree from the Fuqua School of Business and the Nicholas School of the Environment has been reviewed and approved by the faculties of both schools and received letters of support from the Deans of the Pratt School of Engineering and the Sanford School of Public Policy.

Program Summary

The Master of Science in Business, Climate and Sustainability targets recent college graduates and offers an education in business fundamentals through the lens of climate and sustainability. It will consist of a fixed, 15-course curriculum, taught over 10 months. Each term will be six (6) weeks in length, followed by an exam period. Students will matriculate in a summer term, followed by two terms in the Fall and two terms in the Spring. Classes will meet twice per week for 2 hours and 15 minutes. This structure is consistent with several existing Fuqua programs. The proposal anticipates enrollments of up to 100 students in the first cohort, potentially expanding to 200 students within the first four (4) years. Approximately 50% of the enrollments are anticipated to be international students.

Our assessment of this proposed degree is given below.

Strengths:

Strategic Alignment

- The proposal aligns well with [Duke's Climate Commitment](#). It will prepare graduates with a balance of environmental and business education that is not currently addressed in Duke's portfolio of master's offerings in the climate space.

Existing Models of Successful Implementation

- The proposed program is very similar in scale, scope and tuition structure to the MMS (Master of Management Studies) and MQM (Master of Quantitative Management) programs offered by Fuqua. Attending to best practices and lessons learned from that implementation is likely to benefit the implementation of this program.

Market Demand:

- The proposal makes a compelling case for both student and employer demand for a degree in this area, an argument bolstered by the presentation by Hanover Research in our last MAC meeting that articulated regional and national growth areas.

Resources – Staff:

- The proposal includes provisions for hiring a significant cadre of staff to support the new program, complementing the existing staff infrastructure in Fuqua and NSOE. In addition to a Senior Associate Dean to oversee the program, the proposal requires adding approximately 11 new staff FTEs.

Finances – Donor Support

- In follow-up discussions, it was clarified that \$3M in donor support has been secured. The external commitment demonstrates the value they see in the program. Additionally, covering the start-up costs for the new degree reduces the financial risks of the program for Fuqua and Nicholas.

Concerns & Questions

Finances:

- The proposal requests and assumes 3 years of waived of allocated costs. In discussions, it seems there is a process for waiving allocated costs through the Provost's office. The proposal assumes a waiver will be granted, but this has not been determined. It is also not clear if this proposal is contingent on receiving a waiver for allocated costs. This topic seems like it needs more clarity.
- There is no mention of additional provision of English instruction beyond what is already offered by the schools, but 50-100 international students will likely require additional course sections and instructors. This should be reflected in the budget.
- The overall finances for this program shows the program breaking even after 5 years if the allocated costs are waived for 3 years and the degree achieves its targeted enrollment of 200 students per year. There are a number of resources committed to this new program and likely needed to coordinate a complex degree jointly run by two schools. The proposal does discuss actions to take if enrollment does not meet expectations, but it is important to be aware of the financial risks associated with this new degree program.

Resources – Faculty

- The proposal indicates funding to compensate faculty for teaching in the program and identifies existing faculty to teach these classes. Initially there are 30 classes per year being taught between the two schools and increasing to 45 classes per year. It seems unlikely that this level of unutilized faculty capacity exists. Faculty strain is often mentioned as a concern with increased master's enrollment. The ability of the schools to accommodate additional classes without a plan for adding faculty is a concern. It would be valuable to provide plans for faculty hiring to ensure faculty in these schools are not put under significant strain as a result of this program.

Impact on Existing Programs

- While the proposal suggests that trends in application rates for adjacent Master's programs in Fuqua and NSOE (MMS and MEMS in particular) are sufficient that the addition of this new program will not cannibalize current offerings, it seems possible that student interest will be from the same pool of applicants pursuing the MMS: FOB or MEM: Business and Environment track.

Resources: Duke Central Services and Student Affairs

The increase in Duke's student population, whether through organic growth or through new academic programs, places an additional burden on a number of services provided centrally through Duke. As master's enrollment increases, we need to ensure that sufficient support is provided centrally. Specifically, some of the strains anticipated by this program are

- Visa Services support for an additional 50-100 students per year requiring I-20s and OPT support.
- Library support for an additional 100-200 students per year plus any domain-specific collection development.
- Support from Student Health, DukeReach and CAPs to absorb needs of this many new students. This support is already strained by current demand. Student do pay student health fees, but there is a lag/gap in how those fees translate into service expansion. There are additional challenges in supporting international students (language barriers, different cultural understandings of seeking mental health resources).
- Ability of DISC (Duke International Student Center) to accommodate the needs of an additional 50-100 international students (DISC provides key services in support of students acclimating to Duke and US culture).
- Ability of Science Drive Garage or other lots and/or Duke buses to absorb as many as 200 additional students per year.

Please note that these comments are not specific to the proposed Master of Science in Business, Climate and Sustainability. Although there is a proposed increase in master's enrollment through this program, we also see organic growth of existing programs that contributes to this strain. As the total number of master's students increases, we need to appropriately scale these Central Duke Services to ensure they are able to continue to support our students.

Risk of Excessive Burden on Durham Resources

- To what degree is the Durham housing market able to absorb 100-200 new students? This concern is multifaceted: limited access to safe, affordable housing; overall increased demand has a potential domino effect on affordability for Duke graduate students more broadly (a key concern in union negotiations); and what are the risks to the Duke brand by the increased pressures on Durham infrastructures (e.g. the Duke Respect Durham movement.)

Name: Use of "Master's of Science"

- The use of "Master of Science" in the name of the degree was a point of discussion. This designation has historically been limited to 3-4 semester research degrees offered by The Graduate School. During the discussion, it was mentioned that Fuqua offers a Master of Science in Quantitative Management. The MAC reviewed a proposal for a Master of Quantitative Management that started enrolling students in 2019. The MAC did not review a Master of Science in Quantitative Management that started enrolling students in 2021. Previously when other programs outside of The Graduate School requested the use of "Master of Science," they have modified their name to avoid the use of "Master of Science." To maintain the "Master of Science" as a research degree offered by The Graduate School, it would be valuable for the degree be called the Master of Business, Climate and Sustainability, or something similar that does not use the "Master of Science" designation.

Miscellaneous Comments

- It would be valuable to indicate the number of units for the degree and not just the number of classes. Master's degrees require at least 30 units and the 15 classes likely exceed that, but it is good to clearly define the under of units in the program so that the program review can verify it fulfills accreditation requirements.

- Some of us have been advised to avoid the use of the term “underrepresented” when analyzing the demographics of our student population. The term “underrepresented” occurs in Figure 2B. We have been told that a full demographics breakdown is okay. Since the proposal will be posted on the public Academic Council website, it would be valuable to modify the language.

Summary

The MAC feels this is a strong proposal that aligns with Duke’s strategy and fills a current gap in our curricular offerings. This program is anticipated to have 200 students per year in its fourth year of operation. There were a couple of resource questions that arose during discussion related to faculty, language support, and central Duke support. Additionally, there is the concern that has arisen for all new and growing programs related to affordable, safe and proximate student housing.

There are two that we wanted to highlight to APC for discussion.

1. Nomenclature. The proposed degree uses “Master of Science” degree. This degree is typically a 3-4 semester research degree offered by The Graduate School. To avoid degree confusion, it is requested that the degree be called “the Master of Business, Climate and Sustainability, or something similar that does not use the “Master of Science” designation.
2. Allocated Costs. The proposal assumes it will receive a three year waiver on allocated costs. This topic generated questions in the MAC and will likely do so in APC and beyond. It seems like it would be valuable to get more clarity or whether or not this waiver is likely to be approved and if this proposal is contingent on receiving a waiver for allocated costs.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding the MAC’s assessment of the proposed Master of Science in Business, Climate and Sustainability.

Sincerely,



Bradley A. Fox
Co-Chair of the MAC



Suzanne Barbour
Co-Chair of the MAC

cc:

Mary Frances Luce, Interim Dean, Fuqua School of Business
Lori Benneer, Interim Dean, Nicholas School of the Environment
Mohamed Noor, Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs