



## **Guidelines for Proposing New Degree Programs**

Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) is committed to offering undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs of the highest quality and value to students. Therefore, proposals for new degree programs should make both the academic and business case for their development. Successful proposals will provide assurance of program quality and relative value by demonstrating student demand and outcomes, faculty interest and credentials, and financial resources and sustainability; they will also indicate how the program supports the College's strategic goals, the University's Top Tier Mission, and the Nevada System of Higher Education's Master Plan/Strategic Goals.

The process for proposing new degree programs described herein is transparent, collaborative, efficient, timely, and aligned with College and University priorities and resources. After consulting with the Deans' Council and other UNLV academic officers, this process was officially adopted by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost in November 2019.

### **Factors to Consider When Proposing a New Degree Program**

1. A request to place a new program on the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Planning Report, commonly known as UNLV's Academic Master Plan, should only be made if the program:
  - Aligns with College, Campus, and NSHE goals and priorities (e.g., Department and College/School strategic plans, Campus Top Tier Mission, Master Plan/Strategic Goals).
  - Is appropriately resourced to support excellence and quality. If resources are needed to launch and/or administer the program, the Dean must commit to list any required program resources as the top priority in the Dean's next and subsequent budget requests.
  - Will be financially sustainable. That is, the resources available and those generated from the program will be sufficient to cover the cost of the program, including instructional faculty and graduate advisors, student recruitment and support, graduate assistantships, space, equipment, materials, software licenses, etc.

- Is supported by a sufficient number of faculty with appropriate credentials and commitment to the proposed program. UNLV must have a robust group of faculty at different academic levels with expertise and specializations in the subject matter, because these faculty are essential for the new degree to thrive and produce highly qualified graduates.
  - Is driven by an adequate understanding of student and workforce demand. The justification for proposing the degree program must include regional and/or national data showing student demand (see page 4), a dearth of competing programs, and employment opportunities for graduates.
  - Will support student success and career readiness.
  - Will create significant enrollment and graduation growth, comfortably beyond NSHE's low enrollment yield thresholds. NSHE stipulates that baccalaureate programs must award at least 20 degrees in the last three consecutive years, and that Master's and doctoral programs must jointly award at least 8 degrees in the last three consecutive years.
  - If relevant, meets requirements for [interdisciplinary graduate programs](https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/interdisciplinary-graduate/faculty), <https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/interdisciplinary-graduate/faculty>. Interdisciplinary graduate programs are structurally housed in the Graduate College, and are governed by an Advisory Board composed of the Deans of the participating Colleges/Schools. The daily operations of interdisciplinary programs are overseen by a committee of faculty from the participating units. Faculty and administrators interested in the possibility of proposing a new interdisciplinary graduate program (IDGP) should consult with the Dean of the Graduate College before beginning the Pre-Proposal process.
2. After the Dean submits all documentation required to place a new degree program on the NSHE Planning Report (i.e., UNLV's Academic Master Plan) to the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs (VPAP). The VPAP personnel, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (if applicable), or the Dean of the Graduate College (if applicable) will evaluate the information provided and comments received about the proposed program, and then brief the Executive Vice President and Provost, who will decide whether the proposed program will be added to the Planning Report.
  3. Additions to the NSHE Planning Report must be approved by the Board of Regents. Because of resource constraints, a College/School will normally only have a maximum of two new degree programs on the Academic Master Plan at any given time.
  4. The title and the scope of the proposed degree need to be endorsed by the Vice Provost for Academic Programs and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (if applicable) or the Dean of the Graduate College (if applicable), and then approved by the Executive Vice President and Provost.
  5. This process ensures that proposed new programs will have broad campus awareness and support once added to the Planning Report.

UNLV seeks to grow its catalog of degree programs in alignment with College and University strategic plans. New degree programs should not be proposed simply to increase faculty and resources within academic units. There exist other opportunities in UNLV's biennial budgeting process to request additional faculty lines or other resources needed for departmental growth.

### **First Steps: Conceptualization, Coordination, and the NSHE Planning Report**

Faculty and administrators considering the idea of proposing a new degree program must schedule an appointment with the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs *prior* to developing the Pre-Proposal for a new degree, major, or program. In the case of undergraduate programs, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education will also participate in the meeting, whereas for graduate programs the Dean and/or Associate Dean of the Graduate College will join in the conversation.

New programs should be supported by the respective Dean(s). This support includes:

- giving a concise presentation about the idea for the program before the Deans' Council,
- and when appropriate, designing the program in collaboration with other units, particularly when the field of study is interdisciplinary and other Deans are interested in participating in the program.

### **Preparing for the Pre-Proposal**

1. Once a new degree is placed on the NSHE Planning Report (i.e., UNLV's Academic Master Plan), the developers of the proposal need to begin working on a more specific plan for the degree.
2. A Pre-Proposal meeting with the Vice Provost for Academic Programs and either the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (if applicable) or the Dean of the Graduate College (if applicable) will be scheduled.
3. The purpose of the Pre-Proposal meeting is a preliminary discussion of relevant issues that the proposal developers will need to address during the course of the Pre-Proposal and/or Proposal processes. Topics to be discussed include the following:
  - Has written documentation been received from the Dean acknowledging that the proposed program is the College's or School's top budget priority for the next and, depending on resource needs, subsequent budget requests?
  - How does the proposed program fit into the Department/School? How does it relate to existing programs? Will it compete for the same students, faculty, and resources?

- How many core faculty are immediately available to participate actively in the proposed program? How many new hires will be made to support this program? What is the timeline for these hires? The number of required faculty varies depending on the type, level, and nature of the program, but generally speaking, a minimum of four affiliated faculty are required to start a program successfully. This number may be higher for research-intensive masters and doctoral programs, or for accredited programs.
- For graduate program proposals, how many graduate faculty (and at what level or rank) will be part of the program? What is the proposed graduate faculty-to-graduate student ratio?
- How does the program support the Department and College missions? How does the program support the College's strategic plan?
- How does the program contribute to the fulfillment of UNLV's mission and core themes, including the Top Tier Mission?
- How does the program address important issues relevant to Nevada citizens?
- Has there been consultation with the Dean of the University Libraries to determine whether the University has the library resources necessary to support the academic needs of the faculty and students in the proposed program?
- How does the program fit within the strategic direction of NSHE?
- What data have been collected and analyzed to demonstrate the need and demand for the new program?
- How many and what type of similar degree programs currently exist in Nevada, in the western part of the U.S., and nationwide, particularly at competing peer institutions?
- What are the employment prospects for students immediately upon graduation and several years later? The resources listed below can give general insights into the occupational outlook and employment trends, but proposals should also include additional discipline-specific data and analysis, as appropriate.
  - Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook  
<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>
  - Nevada System of Higher Education, Strategic Plan Metrics – Workforce  
[https://ir.nevada.edu/strategic\\_plan.php?metric=spm4&mid=workforce\\_dem](https://ir.nevada.edu/strategic_plan.php?metric=spm4&mid=workforce_dem)  
and
  - Nevada State Student Completion and Workforce Report  
<http://npwr.nv.gov/reports/student-completion-and-workforce-part-ii/>

- What are the enrollment projections of the program in Year 1, Year 3, and Year 5, and what is the maximum enrollment goal?
  - What resources are needed for the new degree program to succeed? Please consider faculty, graduate assistants, space, laboratories, equipment, recruitment costs, outside placements, etc.
  - What are the unit's plan to invest in the new program in the future?
  - What is the proposed date of implementation? Remember that this estimate must account for the time required to review and route the proposal, get on the agenda of the NSHE Academics Affairs Council and subsequently on the agenda of the full Board of Regents. Sufficient time must also be allocated for the new degree to be built into UNLV's admissions, enrollment, and other systems, and for the entire admissions cycle to be completed before any students can be enrolled in the program. Typically, the proposed date is at least 12 months after the degree is approved by the Board of Regents (see page 5).
2. If the degree is considered viable, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs will ask the proposers to complete the Pre-Proposal Form, <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/vpap/actions>, and submit it to [vpap@unlv.edu](mailto:vpap@unlv.edu).

### **The Review Path From Pre-Proposal to Full Proposal**

1. After the Pre-Proposal meeting and submission of the Pre-Proposal document, the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs will provide assistance with finalizing the Pre-Proposal.
2. If the Pre-Proposal is approved, the proposers will be asked to submit the NSHE [Full Proposal](https://www.unlv.edu/provost/vpap/actions), <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/vpap/actions>, for the new degree program to [vpap@unlv.edu](mailto:vpap@unlv.edu).
3. If the NSHE Full Proposal is approved, the proposers then need to submit their proposal through the standard Curriculog process to facilitate the UNLV campus review process. The path of review is:
  - a. When applicable, Graduate College, for preliminary technical review of proposal;
  - b. Department vote;
  - c. College/School review & recommendation;
  - d. Faculty Senate (undergraduate level) or Graduate Council Programs Committee (graduate level);
  - e. Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (undergraduate level) or Dean of the Graduate College (graduate level);
  - f. Finally, Executive Vice President and Provost.

### **From UNLV to NSHE to Implementation**

1. If the Full Proposal is approved at all internal review stages, the new program Proposal will be submitted to the NSHE Academic Affairs Council (AAC) by the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs.
2. If approved by the NSHE AAC, the new program Proposal will be forwarded for consideration by the Board of Regents.
3. Once the Board of Regents approves the Proposal, a Provost Alert will notify the Campus of the new program. This Alert prompts various UNLV units to establish the new program in MyUNLV and other required systems. The Chair, Director, or Coordinator will add the new degree to the [Degrees Directory](https://www.unlv.edu/academics/degrees), <https://www.unlv.edu/academics/degrees>.
4. If new resources were requested for the program, it may not be possible to launch the program until such resources are secured.
5. The Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the new program will work with personnel from Undergraduate or Graduate Admissions to execute the recruitment plan, build the necessary admissions application (at the graduate level), and set a reasonable timeline to begin accepting applications. The Chair, Director, or Coordinator will also work with other Campus units, as needed, to update websites to include the new degree program information, hire faculty or instructors as needed, etc.
6. Please note that the necessary faculty and program materials (e.g., courses, catalog, and graduate handbook) must be in place prior to the term in which the first student is admitted.

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