Southern Oregon University seeks Board approval to offer an instructional program leading to a Master of Science in Applied Computer Science.

SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY – M.S. IN APPLIED COMPUTER SCIENCE

1. Describe the purpose and relationship of the proposed program to the institution’s mission and strategic plan.

Southern Oregon University’s (SOU) mission emphasizes academic programs partnering with local organizations and serving the needs of the community and region. This program fits within these commitments and expands on SOU’s record in this area. Southern has established relationships with local companies that will continue to provide internship and practicum opportunities for their students.

In SOU’s Master Academic Plan is a goal to offer multiple professional science master’s programs to promote interdisciplinary collaboration between departments and for long-term growth and sustainability. Several departments are currently working together on proposals for these programs; the Applied Computer Science degree is the first of these to be completed. Another aspect of the Master Academic Plan is to increase the use of distance learning technologies; SOU intends to develop this delivery methodology and make use of it in the curriculum. A goal of the campus Strategic Plan is to offer “a challenging and practical liberal arts education … that is accessible … and addresses regional needs.” The Applied Computer Science students will learn communication and management skills as they become prepared to contribute to the regional economy.

2. What evidence of need does the institution have for the program?

SOU’s former mathematics/computer science master’s degree averaged about five students per year. Students with degrees in other disciplines have asked the Computer Science Department about pursuing a master’s degree in computer science; some of these students are taking undergraduate prerequisite courses that will prepare them for the new master’s program. SOU expects enrollment of 7 students the first year, increasing to about 15 students by the fifth year. Currently, 12 students are enrolled in the existing computer science master’s program.
3. Are there similar programs in the state? If so, how does the proposed program supplement, complement, or collaborate with those programs?

Although Oregon State University has plans to offer professional science master’s degrees, it does not currently offer a professional science master’s degree in computer science. Also, because SOU is in a different region than Oregon State University, the SOU program will complement related programs offered at Oregon State. SOU is collaborating as part of the systemwide initiative to develop Professional Science Master’s programs. The proposed program requires to take the computer science courses at SOU, but students can take management and mathematics course at other institutions offering compatible courses.

4. What new resources will be needed initially and on a recurring basis to implement the program? How will the institution provide these resources? What efficiencies or revenue enhancements are achieved with this program, including consolidation or elimination of programs over time, if any?

SOU’s goal is to fill a faculty position that was lost due to a resignation and the dean has pledged to provide funding for this position. The annual cost to maintain the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) portal is $6,600 and student access to the portal is $42 per student. The Computer Science Department is considering switching to graduate student subscriptions, which would reduce the costs significantly and still provide the same capabilities. The SOU library recommends increasing the library holdings for the program. Should ETIC funding be discontinued in the future, the institution would need to provide commensurate support.

The program is budgeted to break even at five students. However, the proposed program will replace the current master’s program, which has 12 students. It is reasonable to increase the projected breakeven point to six students, which will provide an additional $28,000 annually, support an increase in library holdings, and compensate for any potential deficit in ETIC funding.

All appropriate University committees and the OUS Provosts’ Council have positively reviewed the proposed program.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMITTEE

The OUS Provosts’ Council recommends that the Board’s Academic Strategies Committee authorize Southern Oregon University to establish an instructional program leading to a Master of Science in Applied Computer Science, effective Fall 2010. Pending Committee approval, a five-year follow-up review of this program will be conducted in 2015-16.

(Committee action required.)