Professional Science Master’s: Feasibility Planning

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Determining Feasibility: Key Considerations

- Establishment of broad-based faculty support
- Professional development component
- Workforce relevance
Approaches to PSM Program Development

- Creation of entirely new program
  - gaining approvals more complex and takes more time

- “Professionalizing” existing program
  - adding professional development component
  - adding a professional track or
  - developing a program that builds on an existing related program
Foci of Initial Planning Activities

- Employment projections
- The expertise, interests, background, commitment, and availability of qualified faculty members
- Departmental, collegiate, university, and/or system-level support
- University priorities and culture
- Advisory board prospects
Foci of Initial Planning Activities, Cont’d.

- Qualifications and requirements sought in new employees
- Prospective applicant pools
- Student demand
- Adequacy of available program resources (internal and external) and sources of student funding
- Sustainability
Garnering Support

- Various groups—faculty, college & university administrators, and system-wide or state-level support.

- Garnering support includes conferences, meetings, and/or workshops aimed at building buy-in for the program.
Garnering Support, Cont’d.

- Faculty buy-in is essential—“top down” approaches and administrative buy-in alone are insufficient.

- PSM faculty member champion
Garnering Support
Faculty Members

Allaying concerns:

• Impact on research productivity
• External engagement
• Pedagogy
• Impact on doctoral programs
• Rigor
Garnering Support
College and University Administrators

- A dean or department head may be able to facilitate internal review process and secure provost/presidential support.
  - Likely to have external contacts at levels less accessible to faculty members.
  - Might be especially helpful in obtaining consensus support & backing of fellow deans or heads of participating colleges and departments.

- Graduate dean
Garnering Support
System or State Level Support

- Connect to established priorities and strategic directions.
- Demonstrate role of PSM in workforce development.
- System leaders in excellent position to engage state legislators in recognizing economic development value of PSM as an outcome of partnership between higher education and employment sectors.
Developing a Financial Plan

- Costs vary among institutions & programs and include both start-up costs and recurring costs.

- Possible costs of feasibility planning
  - conference and meetings
  - workforce needs assessment
  - student demand assessment
  - external advisory board development
  - formal PSM affiliation
  - marketing and advertising
Financial Plan, Cont’d.

- **Recurring costs**
  - Personnel
  - Student support

- **Potential sources of funding**
  - internal university allocations
  - industry and business support
  - external grant funds
  - state legislative support
  - contributions from advisory board members
  - tuition and fee revenue
Creating an External Advisory Board

- Actively involved with program faculty
  - clarifying program objectives
  - identifying expected learning and professional skills
  - developing learning outcomes
  - ensuring regional workforce needs will be met

- Regular meetings to provide ongoing advice.
Identification of Advisory Board Members

- About 8-12 representatives from the employment and community sectors
- One or two students
Advisory Board Roles

- Advocate for PSM at local, state, and national levels
- Assist in development of internship sites
- Identify site-based student projects
- Provide financial support
- Hire graduates
- Send current employees to PSM programs and cover their tuition
Advisory Board Roles, Cont’d.

- Role will evolve over planning, implementation, and operational phases of program development.

- When program is operational, the advisory board will assume important role in ongoing evaluation and “fine-tuning” to maintain its currency and attractiveness to students and employers.
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