

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE

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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

Robert C. May
Telephone: (510) 987-0711
Email: robert.may@ucop.edu

*Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
Faculty Representative to the Regents
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200*

April 25, 2019

**MICHAEL T. BROWN
PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

Re: Approval of Online Master of Business Administration at UC Davis

Dear Michael,

In accordance with the *Universitywide Review Processes For Academic Programs, Units, and Research Units* (the “Compendium”), and on the recommendation of CCGA, the Academic Council has approved UC Davis’ proposal to establish an online self-supporting graduate program leading to a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree.

Because this is a new degree title, and the Assembly of the Academic Senate is not meeting within 30 days of CCGA’s approval, Council must approve the program per Senate Bylaw 125.B.7.

I am enclosing CCGA’s report on its review of the new program, and respectfully request that your office complete the process of obtaining the President’s approval.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Robert C. May

Robert C. May, Chair
Academic Council

cc: Academic Council
 Senate Directors
 Academic Planning and Research Analyst Procello

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COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE AFFAIRS (CCGA)

Onyeuchi A. Arah, Chair
arah@ucla.edu

ACADEMIC SENATE

University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200

April 12, 2019

ACADEMIC SENATE CHAIR ROBERT MAY

Dear Robert,

At its April 3 meeting, the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) voted 9-0-1 to approve a new online Master of Business Administration (“Online MBA”) self-supporting graduate degree program (SSGPDP) on the Davis campus. This will be the first online MBA in the UC system.

The Davis proposal models the new online SSGPDP on their existing MBA except the new program will be delivered online in partnership with 2U, Inc., a commercial online program manager. The online MBA will deliver live online classes to small groups of 15 students using 2U’s platform and collaboration tools to maximize interaction and peer learning. The program will also have asynchronous online content. The students will have periodic in-person immersion courses for face-to-face interaction with the faculty and other students. The proposal emphasizes the technological role of 2U as online program management service provider in assisting the Davis campus deliver a successful virtual MBA program. The Graduate School of Management at Davis is proposing this online MBA to help it differentiate itself in the highly competitive MBA market in Northern California.

The proposal was reviewed by four experts in the field. Two of them were from within the UC. One of the external reviewers is the dean of a business school which runs a top online MBA program in the country. The reviewers were impressed by the quality and academic rigor of the program and as well as the expertise and reputation of the faculty. The reviewers also have some concerns such as faculty workload, between-faculty intellectual property issues presented by the potential use of “successor” instructor in the online program, and the quality of the learning management system (LMS) offered by 2U among other minor ones. CCGA and UCPB also had concerns about the quality, contractual and financial aspects of the partnership with 2U. CCGA requested to see the 2U contract and additionally reviewed it in consultation with Senate leadership and the Office of General Counsel after several CCGA members and UCPB voiced continued concerns about the spirit of the 2U partnership which will take some two-thirds of the revenues and entail a long term contract (for a decade at a time). CCGA’s review of existing 2U partnerships within the UC allayed the intellectual property and financial concerns but also uncovered some lessons to share with the Davis proposers. These included the observation that the 2U is better at being a marketing service provider than a technology company that the Davis proposal assumes it to be. It was also discovered that the experience 2U’s LMS has not been very adequate for delivering high-quality online course content within the UC. The timing of production of the videos and adaption of its online platform to the specific needs of a program can also be time consuming. These are important observations that the Davis campus should anticipate and be prepared to address as they move forward with their 2U partnership. The proposers addressed these and other concerns extensively in an acceptable manner. After

considering all these reviews, proposers' responses and assurances from background review of the program and contract, CCGA recommends approval of the proposal.

As you know, CCGA's approval is the last stop of the Academic Senate side of the Systemwide review and approval process except when the new degree title must be approved by the President, under delegated authority from The Board of Regents. I submit this for your review and have enclosed the proposer's response. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions regarding the proposal.

Sincerely,



Onyebuchi A. Arah
Chair, Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA)

cc: Kum-Kum Bhavnani Academic Council Vice Chair
CCGA Members
Hilary Baxter, Academic Senate Executive Director
Jocelyn Banaria, Academic Senate Assistant Director
Chris Procello, Academic Planning and Research Analyst
Jean-Pierre Delplanque, UC Davis Vice Provost and Dean
Edwin M. Arevalo, UC Davis Senate Executive Director
Judi Garcia, UC Davis Senate Analyst

Enclosures (1)

**Lead reviewer report on CCGA Review of Online Masters of Business Administration (MBA) program:
A Self-supporting Graduate Professional Degree Program at UC-Davis**

By: Priyaranjan Jha, UCI representative to CCGA

April 1, 2019

Summary: The Graduate School of Management at UC-Davis has submitted a proposal to start a fully online MBA program. Though many such programs exist in the country, this will be the first online MBA program in the UC system. The program will be run in partnership with 2U, Inc., a proven and successful technology partner. The program will use the same faculty, same courses, same credit hour requirements, and same admission criteria as the current in-person MBA program. The main change will be in the pedagogical methods employed which will consist of live online classes every week, high-end video and audio technologies with small classes of about 15 students each for maximal interaction, asynchronous materials, multiple group assignments using collaboration tools to maximize peer learning, and live on site immersions to develop UC Davis spirit in the students.

Review: The proposal that was submitted to CCGA already had two external letters of support. As the lead reviewer for CCGA I sought 4 reviews: two from within UC and two from outside. I was successful in getting 4 reports. One of the outside reviewers, Eugene Anderson, is the dean of a business school which runs one of the top online MBA programs in the country.

Reviewers were asked to comment on the proposal strengths, as well as its weaknesses. In particular, reviewers were asked to comment on the following issues:

- Quality and academic rigor of the program
- Adequacy of the size and expertise of faculty to administer the program
- Adequacy of the facilities and budgets
- Applicant pool and placement prospects for the graduates

All 4 reviewers were strongly in favor of the program and had a lot of good things to say about the proposal. The reviewers identified the strengths of the graduate school of management at UC Davis in regards to intellectual capital, faculty diversity, student diversity, positioning (strong reputation in technology and innovation), and program portfolio. Since the academic content of the program is going to be the same as the academic content of the current in-person MBA program, this was not a concern. The concerns were minor and related to partnering with 2U, facilities, budgetary issues etc. These concerns were addressed promptly and satisfactorily by the proposers. The reviewer comments and the responses of the proposers are attached.

In addition, CCGA received a review from UCPB which had some concerns. They raised 4 concerns and the proposers responded to each of them. Below I am reproducing the 2 main concerns of UCPB and the responses of the proposer. One related to the ownership of the academic content and the other related to the lower completion rate of URM students.

- 1. There are questions about faculty academic freedom and course content ownership. 2U will modify the faculty materials to suit their perceived audience. What kind of control do faculty retain over pedagogical content and intellectual property?*

The proposers responded:

"We respectfully disagree with both of these assertions. First, there are no questions about faculty academic freedom and course content ownership as those are spelled out by contract. Second, 2U will not modify course materials without faculty consent and approval.

Faculty retain full control over pedagogical content and intellectual property. 2U provides instructional design assistance to faculty creating courses, but 2U does not modify the faculty materials without the faculty member's consent. UC Davis GSM employs all course instructors. With specific reference to intellectual property, please see the relevant article from the official contract below:"

The proposers cited the part of the contract relating to intellectual property which clearly states that the faculty retain control over the academic content. The proposers also made the entire contract with 2U available to CCGA for our perusal.

- 2. Although online can increase diversity in principle, large-scale evidence suggests that it reduces the diversity of completers. What steps will GSM take to deal with lower completion rates for underrepresented minority ("URM") students?*

The proposers responded:

"We respectfully disagree with the assertion that there will necessarily be lower completion rates for URM students in the UC Davis Online MBA. The first study the reviewers cite is purely an opinion piece that contains no empirical evidence. The second study examines MOOCs or Massive Open Online Courses, while the UC Davis Online MBA is not a MOOC and thus the conclusions drawn do not necessarily translate across the two very different online platforms. The third study is a working paper that reviews some of the extant literature from which evidence is either in MOOCs or undergraduate programs, and not from graduate degree programs of a format similar to the UC Davis Online MBA.

Information on differential success rates across race from current online programs that partner with 2U are not publicly available. However, data from 2U show that the proportion of URM students enrolled in 2U graduate programs is 35.45 percent, while the national average for post-secondary enrollments is 28.41 percent, a spread of slightly over seven percent. This statistic is consistent with online graduate programs being effective in providing URM students with the opportunity to obtain a high quality graduate education."

As is clear from the response of the proposers, the data cited by UCPB was not based on online MBA programs but MOOCs which are very different in nature. The data from 2U based on students enrolled in 2U graduate programs shows a higher enrollment rate for URM students

than the national average for post-secondary enrollments, but the concern of the UCPB was regarding lower completion rate not enrollment. The bottom line is that there is no direct evidence on the completion rates of URM students in online MBA programs. However, to their credit the proposers mention that if the completion rates of URM students shows a negative trend, appropriate steps will be taken to remedy it. They mention the following:

"Nonetheless, the CCGA should rest assured that the GSM will most certainly keep a close watch on completion rates for all groups and quickly respond as necessary should any negative trends develop. The UC Davis Online MBA will be reviewed by the UCD Graduate Council on a recurrent basis, and one of the items examined in that review is student completion rates. As a UCD graduate degree the UC Davis Online MBA is subject to all of the same reviews as are in-person graduate degree programs.

Perhaps the single most important aspect that will drive student success in the UC Davis Online MBA is the amount of student-instructor interaction, which is largely missing in MOOCs."

In addition to the above concerns by UCPB, CCGA had some concerns about the need for a partnership with a "for profit" company like 2U. The proposers explained this as follows:

"We understand that some members of CCGA were concerned about our partnership with 2U, a for-profit company. However, it is not an academic partnership. It is a contract for 2U to provide certain services that we are not able to provide ourselves because of the significant investments in platform and recording technologies that would have to be made. Our campus, UC Davis, is not currently equipped to provide these platforms and recording technologies, leaving us with only one solution, a platform and recording contract with an external vendor. "

The detailed response from the proposers regarding the need to enter into a partnership with 2U is attached.

Recommendation: To sum up, this is a very well thought out proposal which has received strong support from all external reviewers. The concerns of the reviewers were minor and have been addressed by the proposers adequately. UCPB and CCGA raised some additional concerns which were also addressed satisfactorily by the proposers. Therefore, I am happy to recommend that the proposed online MBA program at UC Davis be approved.