Principles for creating and presenting new academic programs

Purpose of this document

To frame the program proposal presentations on August 3, 2011
This document is intended to provide a common model for presenting new program proposals at the academic growth meeting on August 3, 2011. It also provides a framework for further developing and interconnecting new academic programs that comprise the Academic Growth Plan. *Presenters are strongly encouraged to frame their proposals in the context of the model presented here.*

The following system of academic programs is derived from our academic growth planning discussions. The sections outline the emerging concepts for new academic planning and provide general principles for presenting and developing each component of the framework. *The goal of aligning the proposals with this model is to increase the connections among the proposed programs, identify shared resources, and advance the ideas and strengthen the proposals through these relationships.*

Overarching concept[1]

Our goal is to create new academic programming that is flexible, multi-modal (delivered to multiple audiences at multiple levels), responsive, and focused on student needs. The framework for this model consists of:

- [ ] **Ecosystems of opportunity** (expanded subject fields)
- [ ] **New degree programs** (addressing the Academic Growth Plan)
- [ ] **Concentrations** (four or more courses in a major)
- [ ] **Bridges** (academic modules bridging school and career)
- [ ] **Flexible Master's degrees (combinations of modules + thesis)**

Subject-ecosystems and expanded subject fields

Principle 1:   **Frame the subject and its 'ecosystem,'**
                     then the disciplines or areas of expertise that describe it

An 'ecosystem of opportunity' expands a single subject area to include its affiliated fields and builds on a set of disciplines and areas of expertise currently existing within the University. For example, the current programs FM, FIM, FAS, FD, TD, and TMT together inform the broader subject of fashion and textiles.

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[1] **Ur-principle:** new programs should drive the Academic Growth Plan by providing exceptional student learning experiences *with low overhead.* Any surplus revenue generated in excess of overhead is reinvested in building the FT faculty and improving academic programs throughout the University.

Principle 2:   **Map the connections between disciplinary majors and area expertise in each subject-ecosystem**
The conceptual framework of the eco-system clearly highlights and leverages the connections that exist between disciplines within the expanded subject field. Subject-ecosystems can also bring together disciplines that exist in different colleges to create coherent integrative educational experiences within the eco-system. Academic components (courses, concentrations, summer certificates, lecture series, minors, etc.) and new degrees are designed to foster and explore these connections. For example, the interfaces between retail merchandizing and production, or production and garment design are facilitated within this framework.

Principle 3:   **Support student choice and opportunities within the subject-ecosystem**
The subject-ecosystem is presented to prospective students as a way of helping them to choose a field, a major or opportunities to focus their studies in a subject. The academic degrees and their components fostering the connections (courses, concentrations, summer certificates, lecture series, minors, etc.) are clearly mapped for current and prospective students. In the example, fashion is presented as a continuum of opportunities spanning retail, industry, materials, and garment design.

Principle 4:   **Build core curricula for the subject-ecosystems whenever possible**
When feasible a core group of shared courses could bind together each subject-ecosystem regardless of a student's chosen major. The core exposes students to inquiry methods from other disciplinary majors and creates a broader academic and social community comprised of all of the students in each subject-ecosystem.

Principle 5:   **Repackage core curricula for other key audiences**
Core curricula or specialty sequences for subject-ecosystems might produce certificate-like experiences for executive education, summer programs, and other varieties of non-degree programs. In some instances credit from the certificate-like experiences might be applied to degree programs.

Principle 6:   **Anchor new degree programs, certificates and concentrations**
The subject-ecosystem serves as the anchor for new degree programs, new certificates and new concentrations (see below).

Degree programs

Degree programs could stand-alone or (preferably) serve as integral components of subject-ecosystems.

Bridges to the professions

Subject-ecosystems spawn groups of certificate-like program modules

Each subject-ecosystem produces academic modules for credit and non-credit consumption that support student transitions to the workplace and/or the needs of working professionals.

Support the transition from student to professional
The modules are positioned to help students make the transition to the professional world by providing them with specific information and credentials that distinguish them in the job market. In some cases modules might be taken during the summer and the credits applied to degree programs.

Support working professionals
The modules would also be targeted at working professionals who desire advancement by adding to their bases of knowledge.

Create a series of concentrations from the modules (or vice versa)

A module or core concentration could serve one or more degree programs
The modules form concentrations in degree programs. Several degree programs might share a module; for example the SAIM module of 4 courses proposed by C-ABE.

Create a flexible Master's degree from the modules

Create a degree with only State approval
Create a flexible, module-based Master's degree that would require only State approval (not specialized accreditations).

Module combinations form the core of the Master's degree
Credit bearing modules (1 semester or equivalent) could be applied to a generic Master's degree in "Innovation"[2] that would consist of several modules, a few courses, and a thesis. Students could select pre-defined, "off the shelf" combinations of modules, or create their own combinations.

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[2] The exact title of the new Master's program is unresolved.