UCCS New Degree Program Approval Process

Introduction

The University of Colorado Board of Regents adopted Policy 4-J to set forth a general description of the procedures that are to be followed in developing new academic degree program proposals. This document outlines processes for review and approvals for new degree programs. Changes to existing programs or addition of tracks to existing programs requires a different process. **See flowchart for timeline and process for necessary reviews and suggested timelines.**

Part I. Proposal Review Process

Proposals may be initiated by faculty members through units such as departments, programs, schools and colleges. The proposed degree program must appear in the annual academic planning report that is sent to the Board of Regents and the CCHE prior to its submission to the Board (during spring semester).

A. Campus Process

1. *Pre-concept paper stage*: Each college should have an internal process for bringing a potential degree program to the dean for review. If the program includes multiple departments or colleges or institutions, it must follow the processes of all involved units. The dean should bring ideas he or she supports forward to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (EVCAA) for discussion and inclusion in the annual academic planning report (due July 1 each year). **To be eligible to advance to the Board in an upcoming year, the school or college must submit the idea to the EVCAA no later than May 31.** The expected time from this point to offering the degree will, under most circumstances, be 2-3 years (e.g., May 2016-August 2018) to allow for full consideration at all stages and also for sufficient marketing to occur following regent and CCHE approval to allow the program to meet first year enrollment projections.

2. *Concept paper stage*: If the idea is approved for inclusion in the annual academic planning report, a concept paper is developed by the department/program or school/college and forwarded to the Dean of the school/college for review and approval. The concept paper is 3-5 pages and includes:
   (a) Rationale for the program within campus priorities, including students to be served
   (b) Assessment of the likely demand
   (c) Description of how the proposed program would assure quality
   (d) Explanation of the impact on existing resources, inside and outside the offering units(s)
   (e) Projection of needed additional resources

Note: When determining revenues and costs, consider that there is revenue sharing between campus and programs.

Based on the concept paper, the EVCAA decides whether to advance the concept to deans' council. Based on deans' council discussion, the EVCAA decides whether to advance the concept paper to leadership team for approval to proceed. **The concept paper phase is expected to last through the Fall semester.**

3. *Formal proposal stage*: Once the concept paper has been approved for development, the unit follows the guidelines that appear in Part II of this document, addressing, as applicable, the criteria in Part III. Where proposals involve more than one school or college or institution, all participating units must review and approve the proposal. Proposals approved by the Dean(s) are transmitted to Academic Affairs for review and approval.

   a. A financial pro forma for all programs is required. The first draft of the pro forma should be completed early in the proposal development stage in collaboration with the UCCS Budget Office. The pro forma template for undergraduate programs is available. Pro forma templates for graduate programs are more customized and are available from the Budget Office. The Budget Office must sign off on the pro forma prior to submission to the EVCAA.

   b. **Undergraduate degree proposals** must be submitted to the Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education and Academic Planning for review by the Council on Undergraduate Education (CUE). After approval by CUE, the associate vice chancellor will communicate in writing the substance of the committee's assessment of the proposal to the EVCAA.

   c. In the case of **graduate degree program proposals**, the proposal must be reviewed and approved by the Graduate School Dean and the executive committee of the Graduate School (GEC). Graduate degree proposals must be evaluated by an external consultant prior to being sent to the Dean of the Graduate School. With the approval of the EVCAA, the campus selects a highly qualified, independent evaluator to review the quality of the proposed curriculum, the qualifications of the faculty to offer the program, and the adequacy of resources to support the program. **Please note that the external review letter and program response must be available before the Dean and GEC can render their recommendations.** After approval by the GEC, the Dean of the Graduate School will transmit the proposal to the EVCAA in the form of a letter evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal and giving the dean's opinion of its suitability.

Approved August 2016

d. During the process of developing the proposal, the campus should work closely with the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) to insure compliance with state requirements and CCHE and board policies. The VPAA office may recommend consultation with CCHE staff to assure that the contemplated degree is consistent with the campus role and mission.

e. When the EVCAA has confirmed that the proposal has been recommended by the CUE or by the GEC and the Dean, as appropriate, and that the proposal is ready for final campus consideration, the proposal will be submitted to the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance (VCAF) for financial review and considered by Leadership Team for review by the University Budget Advisory Committee (UBAC). UBAC requires two meetings for review and then vote in subsequent meeting.

f. If the proposal is recommended by UBAC, it comes to the Chancellor for final campus approval. The Chancellor shall provide a letter of support for the proposal attesting to its academic rigor and quality, to adequate demand for the program, and to the availability of resources to offer the program and transmits the proposal to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Approval by the Board of Regents and CCHE will normally require four to six months after the proposal is transmitted to the VPAA.

B. CU System Process

The VPAA provides the proposal to other CU campuses for review and comment, particularly concerning duplication and quality issues. The proposal is presented to the Board of Regents at the next available Board study session. If no concerns are raised, the VPAA will then submit the proposal to CCHE for review of its consistency with the institution's role and mission. CCHE has 30 days to provide a written response to the President on this question. If the Commission has no concerns, the proposal may go forward to the Board of Regents for approval. If the Commission does have concerns, it will communicate its concerns in writing to the Board of Regents. University personnel may work with Commission staff to resolve these issues. If CCHE finds a proposal outside the scope of the institution's approved role and mission, the proposal may not go forward.

C. Program Implementation

New degree programs approved by CCHE must be initiated within two years of approval or the approval to offer the program shall expire. All new degree programs are subject to review during their first five years of operation under CCHE's Review Policy and Procedures for Newly Approved Academic Degree Programs in State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education. The enrollment and graduation rates of new degree programs are subject to annual monitoring by CCHE. CCHE compares actual enrollment and graduation rates to the estimates in Table 1 of the degree proposal. Programs that fail to meet their estimated targets in year 3 or year 5 of

operation may be closed by CCHE. Programs that meet their target will be formally reviewed at the end of year 5 and awarded full approval. A final requirement for continued approval of a new degree is that the campus maintains accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Part II. Guidelines for Program Proposals

All proposals shall be prepared in electronic format for ease of transmission. They must cover the topics outlined below and should consider the campus approval criteria addressed in Part III.

A. Description of Program

    1. Describe the basic design of this program, including its level (baccalaureate, master's, doctoral) and the field of study. Is this an interdisciplinary program?

    2. What are the student learning goals of this program? What will a graduate of this program have learned and be able to do? The goals should be sufficiently specific that they can be readily assessed; should the program be approved, the goals should be a basic component of future program review.

B. Bona Fide Need: Student Demand and Workforce Demand

    2. Student Demand: What is the target market? What evidence is there of student demand for this program?

        (a) Provide enrollment projections for the program for the first five years in Table 1, following the definitions and directions specified in the table. Also include explanations of the methodology and assumptions used to project enrollment and completion data. Relevant information might include national or regional enrollment trends in similar programs and projected new demand from industry in the service area. Information regarding number of new students to UCCS separate from the number of current UCCS students who may change majors must be addressed.

            Enrollment and graduation estimates should be conservative; if the program is approved and implemented, these figures will be used to determine whether the program has met its goals and should be continued. Programs that fail to meet their estimated enrollment and graduation projections in Year 3 will be thoroughly reviewed for discontinuance by CCHE.

        (b) For graduate and professional programs, indicate the annual pool of potential applicants. Useful information might include the number of qualified undergraduates in the institution's undergraduate program, the current percentage of undergraduates, regionally or nationally,

continuing on to the graduate level, and the number and/or proportion of applicants to existing programs who are not gaining admission to existing programs. If applicable, explain how the new program may reduce the number of applicants to an existing program.

    (c)   Explain how the program design will address the needs of part-time, working students. What specific efforts will be made to retain under-represented groups enrolling in the program?

  3. Workforce Demand: What evidence is there of need or workforce demand in Colorado for graduates of this field?

    (a)   For programs that aim primarily to prepare students for graduate or professional school, describe the opportunities for admission to graduate or professional programs. What will ensure that graduates of the proposed program will be qualified for these openings?

    (b)   For programs that intend to prepare graduates for specific occupations or professions, provide demand and employment information.

B. Role and Mission Criteria. Is this program congruent with the role and mission of the campus? How does it support the campus's mission? Does it fit with the campus and/or college strategic academic plan? Describe particular institutional strengths in the proposed program area.

C. Duplication. Is there duplication with other institutions? If so, are there unique characteristics or features of this program that are not duplicated elsewhere in the state that would justify this program? Duplication is particularly an issue for graduate and professional programs, most especially doctoral level programs, because of the high cost of graduate offerings. Proposals should discuss graduate/professional offerings at other institutions that may appear to duplicate and explain either (1) how the proposed program does not duplicate other offerings or (2) why a duplicate or similar program is justified. These statements should be reviewed for accuracy by the other institutions whose programs are being discussed. How will its implementation affect other institutions in the state? List all similar existing programs offered in the state and region, and explain why existing programs cannot meet the needs of the prospective students (and, if relevant, employers) in the geographic area to be served.

D. Statutory Requirements. Does the proposed program conform to statutory requirements, such as the 120 credit hour limit for undergraduate degrees and the Students' Bill of Rights?

E. Admission, Transfer and Graduation Standards

  1. Describe the admissions requirements of this program. If they are different from general campus or college requirements, how and why are they different?

2. Describe requirements for transfer students. If specific articulation agreements are in place or being considered, these should be described.

3. If enrollments are to be limited, describe the restrictions on enrollments and the reasons for them.

4. Describe the standards for continuing in the program and the graduation requirements. If they are different from campus/college requirements, how and why are they different?

F. Curriculum Description and Assessment Process

1. Describe the program requirements, including total credit hours, credit hour distribution, methods of delivering the program, field experience, and other pertinent aspects of the curriculum. Explain how this curriculum is like and/or unlike the usual curriculum in this field.

2. List all the titles of courses that support this program and explicitly identify all new courses being created for this program. For undergraduate programs, the pro forma will require all courses are detailed by year in program.

3. Provide a sample curriculum, including all required courses. If there are several tracks or options, include sample curricula.

4. Describe the assessment plan for this proposed degree. (This section should be related to the student goals outlined in II. A. 2.) The assessment plan should include the goals and objectives of the program for student learning and what knowledge, intellectual capacities and skills will be developed by this curriculum. Describe the assessment tools that will measure how well the program fulfills these goals and objectives. The plan must describe how the department will use student outcomes information and any feedback from employers or from licenser and other testing scores to change teaching methods and/or the curriculum.

G. Professional Requirements or Evaluations

1. Where pertinent, describe any regional or professional accrediting association or licensing requirements that have helped shape the curriculum of the proposed program. Specify the effect of these requirements on the length of the program, restrictions on program content or mode of delivery; and any budgetary requirements, such as minimal staffing levels, and equipment needs.

2. Identify timetables that have been established to meet the requirements, if needed.

3. Describe the qualifications of the proposed program's faculty. Include in an

Approved August 2016

appendix short vitae (one-page) for the faculty who will teach regularly in this program.

H. Institutional Factors

1. Describe how this program will contribute to achieving the department's and campus's diversity goals.

2. How will the implementation of this program affect other instructional, research, or service programs in the institution? How will it affect other campuses?

3. How will the implementation of this program affect existing resources, including library, computer, and laboratory resources?

4. Describe any fundamental dependencies on a department in a different school/college. A letter of support from that school/college's dean shall be included with the proposal.

5. Describe any formal relationships with other parties that are anticipated, such as inter- institutional arrangements, resource sharing, cooperative programs, clinical affiliations, etc. Describe and explain the type and extent of the relationship and the resources provided by the affiliating institution. A copy of any draft contracts or agreements should be included in the Appendices.

I. Physical Capacity and Needs

1. Provide space estimates for program space requirements in Table 2 based on existing and five-year space planning assumptions and program size data from curriculum and student load projections and projected use of special or dedicated facilities, such as laboratories. The Vice Chancellor for Administration, or VCAF delegate, must sign this Table to certify the accuracy of the information it contains.

2. In the body of the application, describe program delivery and program space requirements, identifying additional space or equipment needs.

   (a) When significant capital construction or equipment needs are anticipated, please provide additional information and explanations.

   (b) If program space requirements mandate additional facilities or significant renovation, summarize alternate solutions considered, including, where relevant, leasing or renting space and new construction, and (2) conclusions from relocation and operating cost analyses that indicate the best use of resources. Operating costs, as well as space efficiency, should be considered. Explain contingency plans for operating the program in the event that capital construction funds are delayed for

Approved August 2016

implementing the Facility Program Plan.

J. Cost Description and Source of Funds

   1. Report cost estimates and sources of funds for five years in Table 3, using the definitions and instructions provided with the table. All cost and revenue projections for the five years should be given in constant dollars, i.e., do not include an inflation factor.

   2. Program costs include both operating and capital start-up needs. Estimates of operating costs should be based on the delivery of the courses and services defined for the program. Administrative costs must also be factored in. Program budgets should be calculated in a realistic manner. For example, additional work generated by the operation, management, and oversight of a new program should not be claimed to be absorbed into the workload of existing staff and faculty without an explanation of what other work will be reassigned or discontinued to make room for the new workload.

       The proposal must include a written statement from the Dean verifying the adequacy of resources to support the new program, as outlined in the program's budget, and confirming that projected resources are reasonable.

K. Other Relevant Information

Campuses may include any other information deemed relevant to support new program proposals. Copies of letters of support from students and community members are not usually necessary or helpful. The Board of Regents may request additional information pertinent to specific issues raised during their examination of new degree program proposals.

L. Reviewers' Comments

Include a copy of the external evaluator's comments and specify any changes that were made in response to the evaluation. If the evaluator suggested changes in the program that are not being made, explain why.

Links: http://www.cu.edu/regents/policy-4j-policy-and-procedures-approving-new-degree-program-proposals

Resources for Proposal Development:
- Financial pro forma template for undergraduate programs
- Graduate pro forma sheets will be developed by UCCS budget office to meet unique needs of program
- New Degree Proposal Process and Timeline Chart

Approved August 2016

Part III. Campus Criteria for Approval of New Degree Program Proposals

The advancement of new degree proposals at UCCS occurs through a collaborative process that includes consultation with faculty, chairs, deans, campus leadership, and campus academic and budgetary review committees prior to a degree being forwarded to the CU System for review and consideration for full approval. As a rule, UCCS will limit the number of undergraduate and graduate degrees it forwards in a given time period to what is specified in its current strategic plan, and the decision to forward a degree must be based on the strategic and academic priority of a particular proposed degree at a given point in time (see criteria below), not merely on when it is brought forward. New degree or certificate programs must clearly fit the mission of the university, be aligned to one or more of the articulated strategic goals of the university, be shown to be ready for development at UCCS at this time, have potential for excellence, and have strong intellectual leadership and adequate resources. Evidence that a proposed program would meet these criteria should be embedded into the program proposal outlined above.
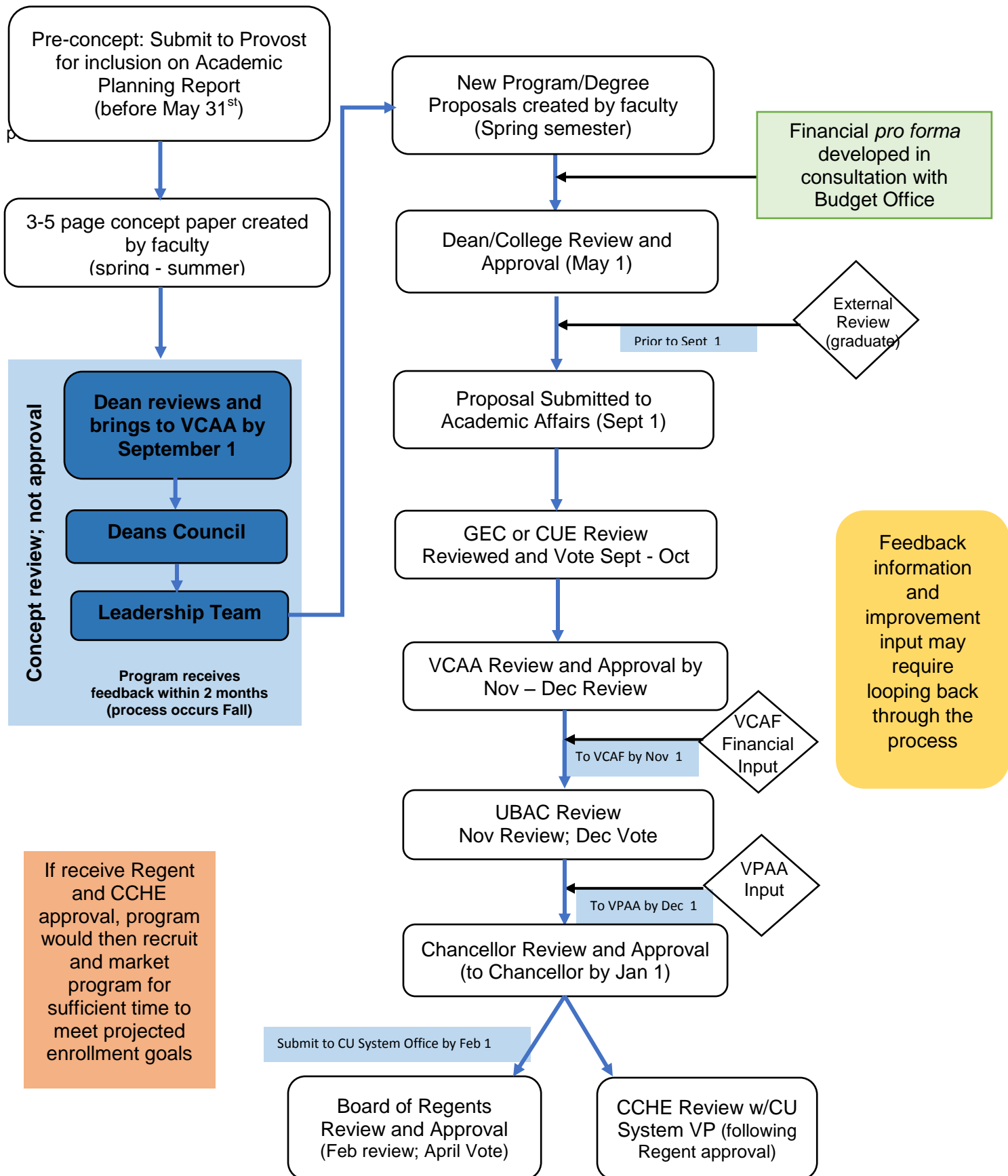
Key criteria are:

- Clear justification for development of the new program based on capacity and need. Contributing factors may include:
  o Strong faculty advocates and leaders within the department or program: a critical mass of committed faculty members who are to be involved in the program and who have an established record of collaboration.
  o Demonstrated capacity for required teaching, advising, and leadership for the proposed program and a viable financial pro forma for hiring and supporting the positions on an ongoing basis.
  o Distinguishing mission and niche or fulfillment of unmet or strategic need: the program either responds to competition from other institutions that are attracting students who otherwise might come to UCCS, or there is a lack of a particular program in the state or region that could attract a substantial number of students, or the program presents an especially strong opportunity to attract students from out-of-state nationally and/or internationally
  o Demonstration that offering the program will attract significant numbers of new students to the campus and/or serve existing populations better than existing UCCS programs do without the program and/or that graduates of the program will meet a regional, state or national need.

- Clear evidence that capacity exists or can be created within the constraints of existing and program-generated resources to create a program that advances campus excellence.
  o Demonstration that the combination of existing resources and new resources requested will be sufficient to support a quality program.
  o Demonstration of how existing external criteria for excellence (e.g., accreditation standards) will be met or exceeded.
  o Explanation of unique, innovative or exceptional characteristics of the program that will contribute to excellence.

- o Identification of internal or external resources that the program will be collaborating with to produce excellence.
- o Evidence that the faculty has made choices in constructing the program's curriculum that foster excellence.

- A research and/or creative works component, especially if the opportunity exists to integrate undergraduate and graduate education.
  - o Opportunities for research enriching education should be included, but with an eye toward clearly delineating needs for research space, faculty, student support, etc. that may be required to make this happen.
  - o A plan for seeking external funding for research and a listing of research-active faculty contributing to the program should be included; discussion of possible external funding opportunities to support student research should also be included.

- Evidence of promoting student engagement, such as internships, active learning, service learning, collaborative learning, and co-curricular activities.

- Ability to leverage other strengths at UCCS (including other departments, colleges, programs).

- Letters of support from affected units must be included with the full proposal to illustrate collaboration and communication about potential additional opportunities and use of resources by a new program.

- There must be evidence that potential additional strain on human or physical resources in the short and longer term created by the new program has been considered.

- Depending on factors including the campus environment, mission, capacity, and budget, reconfiguring or discontinuing another academic track or program to accommodate the new program may be necessary.
  - o If this is the case, discussions of these options should begin in a broad and inclusive manner as soon as the potential need for this is identified and must include representation from the affected program, the college(s), Academic Affairs, and Budget and Finance.
  - o A plan for any reconfiguration or discontinuation must be included early in the process for degree approval; draft for initial campus review; detailed as soon as a full proposal is requested.

- Administrative support in the department(s), program(s), and school(s) involved.
  - o Letters of support from affected units must be included with the full proposal to illustrate collaboration and communication about potential additional opportunities and use of resources by a new program.
  - o There must be evidence that potential additional strain on human or physical resources in the short and longer term created by the new program has been considered.

- A comprehensive financial pro forma that addresses the viability and sustainability of the program including sufficient projected enrollment (supported by reasonable objective data) to justify investment in and addition of the program and show eventual net financial gain over time.

- Joint, interdisciplinary, coordinated, or combined degree proposals must fully explain the details of how academic and administrative responsibilities will be shared among the academic units involved, including academic governance, research infrastructure, and financial pro forma, etc.

UCCS New Degree Proposal Review Process and Timeline

Pre-concept: Submit to Provost for inclusion on Academic Planning Report (before May 31st)

3-5 page concept paper created by faculty (spring - summer)

Concept review; not approval

Dean reviews and brings to VCAA by September 1

Deans Council

Leadership Team

Program receives feedback within 2 months (process occurs Fall)

New Program/Degree Proposals created by faculty (Spring semester)

Financial *pro forma* developed in consultation with Budget Office

Dean/College Review and Approval (May 1)

External Review (graduate)

Prior to Sept 1

Proposal Submitted to Academic Affairs (Sept 1)

GEC or CUE Review Reviewed and Vote Sept - Oct

Feedback information and improvement input may require looping back through the process

VCAA Review and Approval by Nov – Dec Review

VCAF Financial Input

To VCAF by Nov 1

UBAC Review Nov Review; Dec Vote

VPAA Input

To VPAA by Dec 1

If receive Regent and CCHE approval, program would then recruit and market program for sufficient time to meet projected enrollment goals

Chancellor Review and Approval (to Chancellor by Jan 1)

Submit to CU System Office by Feb 1

Board of Regents Review and Approval (Feb review; April Vote)

CCHE Review w/CU System VP (following Regent approval)

Dates are suggestions for getting through committees when faculty may be working on proposal during an academic year. Committees will review materials as soon as possible after received.

Final August 2016