

RBI Process to Broaden Audiences

Strategic Plan Theme: Staff and Faculty Success

Funding Level: Below \$1 million

Facility Needs: No new facilities will be needed

Submitting Unit: Broad

Collaborating colleges/departments/units involved with this proposal.

College of Veterinary Medicine, Hub for Innovation in Learning and Technology, Eli Broad College of Business, College of Education College of Agricultural Natural Resources, College of Social Science, College of Communication Arts and Sciences

What is the proposal's big theme or idea?

Update Revenue Based Initiatives policy for new online/blended programs.

What is the proposal's goal?

- 1) Define which learners are considered “new to MSU” in service of highlighting any RBI boundary conditions that faculty/college-leadership should be aware of.
- 2) Consider alternative pricing for out-of-state online students. E.g. flat \$200 fee per credit hour for out-of-state students (in-addition to any online fees) rather than paying out-of-state tuition. In a digital world where borders don't matter for delivery, we need to move towards market-based pricing. Ohio State has done this to broaden reach.
- 3) Standardize the revenue split between the Office of the Provost and the hosting college.
 - a) Remove the need for Provost-Dean negotiations in all but the most idiosyncratic circumstances.
 - 4) Explicit reference to steps and subjectivity involved in the process;
 - a) I.e. without a rubric to afford entrepreneurial faculty and staff a window into the Provost's Office innovation priorities, the decision to approve a program as RBI is largely viewed as being subjective, and that adjudication takes place today after all the work has been completed to curate new courses and clear academic governance—itself a 12-18 month process.
 - b) Improving transparency will emphasize that we support the creation of meaningful educational experiences to new and non-traditional audiences.
- 5) What services (e.g. course development, market assessment, start-up advertising, etc.) will be provided by the University to support RBI programs? Which are already included in the University's share of revenue?
- 6) Services for external partnerships, selected at the discretion of the college, should come from the college's share of revenue. How do we handle shares of gross-tuition revenue with outside parties?
- 7) Provide a clear view of incentive, support, and reward/cost to reach market ahead of departments spooling up prospective programs.
- 8) A template for evidence in market analysis and enrollment projections.
- 9) A clear sequence of necessary approval steps and which administrators are involved.
- 10) What are the roles of various central administrators in approval of new programs and new RBI?
- 11) In what ways are blended programs also eligible for RBI structures? Are there any limitations?
- 12) Clarifying circumstances in which the RBI model could be applied to certificates.

- a) Today certificates can qualify as RBI when the certificate involves courses that are newly developed for an RBI degree program—but there is relatively little guidance around whether a stand-alone certificate, attracting new adult learners outside of East Lansing and consisting of courses that have already cleared academic governance, qualifies as RBI.

Define the significance, or impact of your big idea.

Michigan State University’s land grant mission and history of providing practical knowledge to address problems has never been more relevant. The RBI structure provides important revenue to support the additional costs associated with distance learning programs; e.g. paid advertising (lead generation), pre-enrollment advising (helping adult learners choose MSU amongst the countless alternative online options and start dates without the natural cadence experienced in recruiting on-prem learners), and leagues of additional advising once learners are enrolled as they lack the natural touchpoints found in on-prem programs (e.g. conversations in between classes) from which to glean academic policies from peers and adjacent cohorts.

The current process is challenging to interpret as many of the roles within the Provost’s Office and OPB have shifted in the last 24 months. An updated set of guidelines charting the formal governance, structures, and pathways for new RBI programs—as well as their boundary conditions—would provide deans, faculty, and staff with a template around why and how MSU promotes teaching and learning innovations.

In addition, there are resource needs throughout Michigan State University’s colleges following a number of budget reductions and periods of strategically targeted allocations. Our faculty, staff, and administrators have proven remarkably entrepreneurial in the past when presented with clear opportunities to embark on RBI programs. Recent reorganizations amongst MSU’s senior-most leadership and administrators have blurred the pathways for units to create value for their college, MSU, and our surrounding communities.

Who will be impacted?

Online and Blended programs with access-oriented and job-market relevant programs are a vital service of educating and impacting adult learners across the state and around the globe that cannot avail themselves of our traditional, residential, full-time learning experiences. MSU is remarkably well positioned to meet the needs of professional learners and provide practical education solutions that will allow individuals to thrive and provide life-wide opportunities. In turn, we also have the ability to coalesce with industry and related stakeholders to meet the rapidly emerging shifts that our global society faces.

Reaffirming the impetus for RBI programs at MSU and detailing the associated policies transparently—with an eye to correct for hard lessons learned with our RBI experience to date—will result in far fewer missed-swings, saving faculty, staff, and adjudicating senior administrators’ significant time.

Entrepreneurial faculty, especially those with active social networks among employers and professional development communities ought to be empowered to help MSU pursue new market opportunities. Providing a straightforward and transparent path to secure the necessary approvals to create new programs and new market-relevant curriculum for mid-career professionals and employer-sponsored students will broaden MSU’s appeal to a wider and more diverse set of students. This in turn will broaden our enrollment base and diversify revenue streams. This proposal is in the interest of our globally engaged, community engaged, and employer engaged faculty who see opportunity. We should incentivize them and their college administrators to pursue these opportunities, and provide a clear path to launch RBIs.

What does sustainability for your proposal look like?

An RBI model that broadens audiences for MSU will be sustainable when it is fully incorporated into MSU’s decision-making, administratively supports curricular approval, is understood uniformly among stakeholders, and is transparent to faculty developing new programs.

Sustainability follows once everyone is on the same page; we again surface a starting path based on our team’s discussions, our shared objectives, and our overwhelming bias towards action: • Revenue sharing is based on a standard formula • Negotiated deviance from the standard is rare, and made to accommodate truly

special needs of a particular program, audience, or cost-burden. Not because of ordinary internal politics. • Any RBI model ought to adequately supports student acquisition costs (e.g. advertising, external partners), indirect expenses (central support units, academic unit overhead, student services in the college) and direct expenses for the program (e.g. instruction). • Program startup decisions must be matched in the long run with equally effective academic program reviews and *sunset plans for RBI programs that don't perform*, while meeting obligations to currently enrolled students.