



## **Notice of Intent to Offer a New Degree and Major University of Wisconsin-Madison**

**Name of the proposed degree/major:**

New Degree: Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS)

New Major: Applied Social Science

**Home department/department-like unit and School/College:**

Dean's Office, College of Letters & Science (L&S)

**Mode of delivery** (face-to-face, online, other-specify): Online

**Proposed CIP Code:** 45.0101; Social Sciences, General

**Primary university contact person:** Jocelyn Milner, Vice Provost of Academic Affairs

**Program Description and Learning Outcomes**

UW-Madison is proposing a new degree, Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS), and a companion major, Applied Social Science, to be offered through the College of Letters & Science (L&S) in an entirely online format. This is one of a set of offerings under the Chancellor's Online Learning Initiative. L&S Dean's Office will coordinate the faculty oversight committee, the involvement of faculty in design and delivery of the program, and the connections with centralized student support and coaching services for online programs. Applied Social Science is the first of a series of majors to be offered in conjunction with the BLS degree.

The BLS degree will be a liberal arts degree designed for returning adult students who have earned some college credit but who have not yet completed a first undergraduate degree. L&S is very successful at educating traditional age college-going student population, having enrolled more than 16,000 undergraduates in 64 majors associated with the BA and BS degrees in recent years. In creating this new program L&S proposes to broaden access to a UW-Madison liberal arts degree to part-time adult learners who have needs that are not met by traditional programs.

Like other UW-Madison bachelor's degrees, the BLS will require student complete 120 college credits, which include general education requires, degree and major requirements, and at least 30 upper-level credits "in residence" earned through UW-Madison course-taking while enrolled in the program. The curriculum will include courses in computer, data, and information studies. At least one required course will integrate prior academic, professional, and life experience that will serve as a bridge to more focused study in their major. The major, at least 30 credits of the full 120 credits, will afford students opportunities to integrate academic study with applied activities from their workplace, internships, volunteer and service-learning placements, and career exploration coursework. The BLS and companion majors will provide students with a more flexible curriculum and better

accommodates transfer credit than the traditional BA/BS degrees within the context of the academic rigor and liberal arts and science strengths for which programs in L&S are known.

BLS learning outcomes are such that by graduation students will be able to:

1. Identify and integrate many types and sources of information. Students will be able to recognize, reason with, and combine multiple forms of qualitative and quantitative information and data, from culturally diverse perspectives and sources.
2. Analyze information using a variety of methods. Students will be able to critically evaluate and analyze information using methods from the arts and humanities, the social sciences, the natural and physical sciences, and the computational and data sciences, informed by diverse cultural perspectives.
3. Investigate important problems, issues, and opportunities for change. Students will be able to approach complex topics from multiple perspectives, understanding them in a variety of contexts and from different cultural lenses.
4. Develop effective, culturally sensitive evidence-based solutions. Students will be able to combine their rigorous analysis of relevant evidence to develop and defend creative insights and effective solutions concerning these important issues.
5. Communicate persuasively with a broad range of people. Based on an understanding of the varied ways in which people experience the world, students will be able to collaborate and communicate proposed solutions effectively and ethically with people from a range of perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds.

The major in Applied Social Science will explore the social sciences - the systematic and evidence-based study of the social world, encompassing all of the political, economic, legal, technological and cultural ideas, structures and processes that humans created to live together as a society. Social science data, methods, and theories are used to understand how social life *works* to help social life *work better*. Applied study across the social sciences, integrated with a broad liberal arts foundation, offers an ideal framework for identifying issues, questions, and opportunities that are important to humans, groups, institutions, and society.

Applied Social Science major learning outcomes:

1. Students will be able to recognize, reason with, and combine **multiple forms of qualitative and quantitative information and data that are common to the social sciences**, from culturally diverse perspectives and sources.
2. Students will be able to critically evaluate and analyze information **using a variety of methods common to the social sciences**, informed by diverse cultural perspectives.
3. Students will be able to approach **complex social, interpersonal, and institutional issues and opportunities for innovation** from multiple perspectives, understanding them in a variety of contexts and from different cultural lenses.
4. Students will be able to use **tools and techniques common to the social sciences** to combine their rigorous analysis of relevant evidence to develop and defend creative insights and effective solutions concerning these important issues.
5. Based on an **understanding of the varied ways in which people experience social life and social institutions**, students will be able to collaborate and communicate proposed solutions effectively and ethically with people from a range of perspectives, cultures, and

backgrounds.

### **Resources required to deliver the program**

This program is one of several undergraduate programs UW-Madison is developing under the Online Learning Initiative (see section below on strategic plan). L&S already provides a number of online courses through this initiative that satisfy general education and other core requirements. L&S faculty will build on this foundation and the program will draw on the strength of UW-Madison faculty across the social sciences to deliver the program. No additional tenure/tenure track faculty are required to launch the program; instructional faculty will be added as needed as the program grows.

The program will be supported through tuition revenue generated by through the online program, expected to be proposed at \$600 in the full proposal. Through development and launch L&S will receive financial support for program development and delivery through the Initiative. At scale, tuition revenue will fund all ongoing expenses. Enrollment is anticipated at 50 when the program opens in Fall 2022, with enrollment growth to 500 in the first five years.

Campus and college resources are available to support the delivery of online instruction, including support for instructors who will serve this new audience. These resources include instructional support units and a research community that explores and implements research-based online course design and best practices for online learning, and L&S will partner with the Division of Continuing Studies, which has extensive expertise in serving adult learners. All courses in the program will work toward a full review process for the Quality Matters instructional design framework, which is a nationally recognized program to certify online course quality. Instructors will abide by the campus-approved Digital Education Principles that express UW- Madison quality standards for online teaching and learning. In addition, a centralized student services hub has been established to support students enrolled in the online undergraduate programs.

### **Approvals required beyond the Board of Regents**

No additional approvals are required; UW-Madison is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission to offer online/distance programs.

### **Alignment with the institutional mission and strategic plan**

The BLS degree and companion Applied Social Science major are consistent with the broad mission of UW-Madison<sup>1</sup> to serve the state, and beyond, through the core component of the institutional purpose to “improve the quality of life for all”. The BLS and its majors will contribute to the university’s broad and balanced array of academic programs; promote and strengthen interdisciplinary study; and serve society by meeting continuing educational needs. The major in Applied Social Science will strengthen students’ cultural understanding, their understanding of social, political, economic, and technological change through research and service. The programs reflect appreciation for, and commitment to, the ideals of a pluralistic, multiracial, open, and democratic society. The ability to flexibly transcend disciplinary boundaries is essential to the study of the liberal arts and sciences. Thus these programs can be seen an evolution of the University’s educational offerings using modern technology to broaden access to “the beneficent influence” of the university, to improve the lives of people living and working in and beyond Wisconsin.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wisc.edu/about/mission>

The 2020-25 Strategic Framework (<https://strategicframework.wisc.edu/>) advances UW-Madison's vision to be a model public university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The five priorities include "Excellence in Teaching and Educational Achievement: Provide access to a world-class, affordable educational experience." A featured initiative under this priority, which is intended to expand access to a UW–Madison education, leveraging new modes of delivery to engage with students throughout their lives, is the centralized Online Learning Initiative. The Online Learning Initiative supports faculty and instructional designers to develop and deliver high quality online courses and programs at all levels and is especially focused on launching a suite of fully online degree programs. The BLS degree and the Applied Social Science major are part of this initiative.

From a recruiting perspective, UW Madison will focus on adult learners with some college, with a supplementary focus on those with a Badger connection. This will include former students who left with credits but did not complete their degree (approximately 3000 such individuals from entrance cohorts in the past 15 years) and individuals who aspire to an association with UW-Madison. Enrollment in the suite of online programs aims for 1,000 students by Fall 2023 with substantial growth into the future.

### **Need for the new program**

In 2016, the Institute for Research in Higher Education predicted that by 2020, 62% of jobs in Wisconsin would require a postsecondary degree<sup>2</sup>. Report after report confirm that higher education is tied to the economic prosperity of the state and of the region, and that access to baccalaureate education is a lever that can address barriers to economic equity, stability, and mobility<sup>3 4 5</sup>. Analyses conducted for the university identified over 800,000 Wisconsin residents with some college but no degree, with over 39,000 individuals realistically motivated to complete a baccalaureate degree. Wisconsin's neighboring states have 28.6 million residents with an adult education population profile like those in Wisconsin. The addressable market of Upper Midwest residents with some college credit but no bachelor's degree is approximately 11 million. Online undergraduate degree programs provide access for these students, particularly working adults, and those with caregiving responsibilities. A market analysis found that generalist "liberal studies" degree/major (coupled with majors in various areas of the Social Sciences) have a large and growing market.

### **Alignment with the existing UW-Madison academic program array**

The BLS will complement the array of 64 baccalaureate degree/majors offered by the College of Letters & Science. These programs serve students seeking a traditional "science intensive" BS or "language,

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<sup>2</sup> Institute for Research on Higher Education. 2016. College Affordability Diagnosis: Wisconsin. Philadelphia, PA: Institute for Research on Higher Education, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania. <http://www2.gse.upenn.edu/irhe/affordability-diagnosis>.

<sup>3</sup> Berger, Noah and Peter Fisher. 2013 (August 22). "A Well-Educated Workforce is Key to State Prosperity." Retrieved from the Economic Policy Institute website: <https://www.epi.org/publication/states-educationproductivity-growth-foundations/>

<sup>4</sup> Bernstein, Jared and Ben Spielberg. 2015 (June 5). "Inequality Matters." Retrieved from *The Atlantic* website: <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/06/what-matters-inequality-or-opportunity/393272/>

<sup>5</sup> Chetty, Raj, John Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, Nicholas Turner, and Danny Yagan. 2017. "Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility. Retrieved from the New York Times website: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility/>.

humanities, and humanistic social sciences intensive” BA, coupled with majors that require deep study in a discipline, often preparatory to application to further advanced study in a field. L&S programs are supported by more than 800 faculty and nearly 500 instructional staff, many of whom will also participate in the proposed programs. None of the existing BA/BS programs can be earned online, and that will continue. The BLS and Applied Social Science major will provide a part-time, online route to a liberal arts degree at UW-Madison.

### **Alignment with existing academic programs across the UW System**

A review of UW System programs illustrate that colleagues across the UW System have already been extending access to baccalaureate-level online education to citizens of the state, nation, and world, and have pursued a variety of avenues for doing so.

The UW Extended Campus website lists 72 baccalaureate-level programs available online. Many of these programs focus on specific careers or career pathways (e.g., nursing, business administration, criminal justice), while others are technical in nature. Some are online versions of their residential bachelor of arts or science degree programs (with modification to allow for online completion) coupled with discipline-focused undergraduate majors (e.g., UW- Milwaukee’s BA/BS which can be completed with History, Political Science, Jewish Studies, Psychology, or Sociology majors).

Five UWs offer an undergraduate program in social sciences with the same CIP code as proposed for the UW-Madison Applied Social Science major (45.01010): UW-Platteville (BA/BS-Social Studies); UW-River Falls (BA/BS-Social Studies, Broad Field); UW-Stout (BS-Applied Social Science); UW-Superior (BA/BS-Social Studies, Broad Area); UW-Whitewater (BSE-Social Studies, Broad Field). These offerings are on-campus programs and none are combined with the BLS.

Two UWs offer the BLS degree, both combined with a Liberal Studies major (CIP code 24.0101): UW-Eau Claire and UW-Oshkosh. Both cases are on-campus degree programs.

We have identified three programs that, like the proposed program, are general liberal studies programs, offered in online/distance formats, and designed to serve the adult, degree-completing audience:

- UW-Whitewater offers an online BA/BS degree with a Liberal Studies major; students complete requirements across broad categories encompassing skills, content, and experience (internships and travel study) (\$371 per credit for WI resident<sup>6</sup>)
- UW-Parkside offers an online degree completion BA with a major in Liberal Studies that is designed as a “transfer friendly” (\$375 per credit<sup>7</sup>)
- UW-Oshkosh offers a Bachelor in Liberal Studies with one major, Liberal Studies (\$360 per credit<sup>8</sup>)
- Each of these delivers a general program of study of contemporary issues, communication skills, leadership skills, and (as UW- Oshkosh’s program notes) “work-life balance in American society.” Program materials emphasize learners who are balancing life demands outside of school. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics suggests programs of this type have strong demand: they awarded a combined total of 90 degrees in 2018-19.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.uww.edu/online/bachelors/liberal-studies#online-tuition>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.uwp.edu/live/offices/cashiersoffice/fall-tuition-fees-undergrad.cfm>

<sup>8</sup> <https://uwosh.edu/online/online-degree-programs/liberal-studies/>

The proposed UW-Madison online BLS with the Applied Social Science major has features that distinguish it from other programs:

- Leverages UW-Madison brand-recognition in Wisconsin, nationally, and internationally as part of the broader Online Learning Initiative that has the goal of expanding access through online programming as identified in the 2020-25 strategic plan
- Offers a degree/major combination not offered by other UWs or through UW-Extended Campus
- Builds on an existing and growing set of online course offerings at UW-Madison, many of which have been designed for the Online Learning Initiative, and leverages the expertise of UW-Madison's faculty from a range of disciplines
- Allows students to engage with a major research university from geographically dispersed locations and provides a route to a degree for adults with some college credit, especially those with existing UW-Madison connections including prior enrollment without completion
- Connects graduates to a world-wide alumni network of more than 400,000 Badger graduates
- Is priced above other UW programs at \$600 per credit