Special Session Program Guide: Steps from Idea to Launch!

At the College of International and Extended Studies (CIES), we are very interested in the development of programs that will expand our offerings to special populations or distant locations, to target career enrichment and retraining, or to allow students to accelerate achievement of an objective. Because your program ideas play a critical role in advancing the University in its mission to offering high-quality academic courses and programs, we want to encourage and support your involvement by explaining what it takes from the time you present your idea to the time it takes to launch and sustain the program. CIES through its Special Session division, partners with SJSU’s academic colleges and departments to offer a wide range of credit-bearing courses, certificates, and degree programs. This guide provides an overview for working with CIES to develop and launch your special session program.

Before you begin developing your idea, it is important to understand the steps required to turn your idea into a successful program. The following four (4) steps show the general process of program development, culminating in a program launch.

4 STEPS
- Contact key stakeholders
  - Dean & chair
  - CIES: Special Session
  - Undergraduate & Graduate Studies
  - CSU & WASC
- Conduct market analysis
- Write required proposal(s) & get approval
  - CIES: Special Session
  - (include financial model)
  - Undergraduate & Graduate Studies
  - CSU & WASC
- Launch!
Step I. Make Initial Contact with Key Stakeholders
When you have an idea for a program, there are several organizational units within the University that you need to contact as you move from early idea to a formal program plan. Below lists the individuals and/or units that you should contact and meet with during the initial stages of conceptualizing a program. We advise that before going into these meetings, you are prepared to clearly discuss the program goals, preliminary structure of the program (e.g., program type, courses and units, instructors, etc.), and your level of commitment.

A. Academic Department and College
The Department Chair and College Dean that review your new program ideas can provide critical insight regarding resources (funding, faculty availability, etc.) and curriculum. Prior to spending considerable time, energy, and effort on developing a program, you need to be sure you have sufficient interest and support for your program within your department/school and college.

B. Division of Special Session in CIES
The Special Session division in CIES has extensive experience working with faculty, chairs, and deans, as well as with potential audiences/partners, in exploring opportunities for self-support programming. Your initial point of contact at CIES is Interim Associate Dean Nami Shukla (namrata.shukla@sjsu.edu). Nami and the staff at CIES work closely with you to fully discuss and understand your program, to describe the standard (and non-standard) opportunities and challenges associated with self-support programs, to provide information about what has and has not worked in the past, and to help ensure the development and implementation of a successful program.

At the early stages, CIES provides guidance about budgeting and staffing for self-support programs, applicable policies and procedures, recruiting nontraditional learners, scheduling options, the approval process, working with third parties, etc. At this point, it is also common to discuss logistical/administrative issues (such as admissions, fee payment, and registration) to ensure that the program can be established in a manner that is accessible for students and can be successfully supported by CIES. It is important that you review the Special Session Program Proposal Template. You might not be able to answer many of the questions on the template at the outset; however, it will give you a good understanding of the questions that need to be addressed in putting together a full proposal.

If you are considering a fully online program or courses, you also need to contact the CIES division, Spartans Online, specifically Nami Shukla (namrata.shukla@sjsu.edu). Spartans Online will provide guidance and the requirements related to offering an online program and courses.
C. Academic Affairs (Divisions of Undergraduate and Graduate Affairs)

One of the more detail-oriented aspects of program development is negotiating the various layers of University approval. Academic Affairs provides oversight of all general fund and self-support academic programs at the University. The Academic Affairs divisions of Undergraduate Studies and Graduate Studies & Research ensure that programs are developed in accordance with campus and CSU policies and procedures. As noted above, programs operating in Special Sessions (such as new degree or certificate programs) go through the exact same process of institutional approval as regular programs.

If you are considering developing any NEW academic degree, program, or certificate, meet with Dr. Dennis Jaehne, AVP of Undergraduate Studies (dennis.jaehne@sjsu.edu) or Dr. Pamela Stacks, AVP of Graduate Studies & Research (pamela.stacks@sjsu.edu) to discuss your program plans. It is essential that you follow the approved curriculum review procedures outlined by the University, so be sure to review the process documents at

http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/faculty/curriculum/index.html
http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/faculty/curriculum/guide/Degrees_Concentrations_Minors/degrees/
http://www.sjsu.edu/gradstudies/curriculum/newdegreeprograms/index.html

D. CSU Office of the Chancellor and WASC

If you are developing a degree program that is new, includes a substantive change to an existing degree program, or will be offered more than 25 miles from campus, you will need to seek WASC and/or CSU Office of the Chancellor approval. Your department and the SJSU WASC Steering Committee are all good resources for assistance in preparing your WASC application. You may also contact Dr. Dennis Jaehne, AVP of Undergraduate Studies (dennis.jaehne@sjsu.edu) as a starting point for understanding CSU and WASC requirements. Both the Chancellor’s Office and WASC approvals are required for dual degrees, international off-campus sites, new off-campus sites, regional centers, and doctoral degrees. Because these steps often take nine months or more, it is important to begin work on the process during the initial stages of program development.

Note that as of July 1, 2013, SJSU has been granted general modality approval for distance education/online programs - this means that WASC will no longer need SJSU to demonstrate experience in offering distance education programs in order to pursue a substantive change approval for new distance education programs.
Step 2. Conduct a Market Analysis

A formal market analysis should be conducted early in the process to examine the feasibility and viability of a self-supporting program before investing resources and going through the extensive development of a full proposal. The analysis must show that there is a high probability for the program to cover its development, implementation, and operating expenses.

Any time the University considers offering a new program, it is important to consider such program characteristics as the anticipated demand for the program, preferred delivery modalities, price point, etc. Components of a market analysis should address the following:

A. Audience-Demand

- Who is the target market? What are their attributes? Educational /career goals? Segment of industry?
- What is the size of the market – current, in 3 years, in 5 years?
- Where are they located geographically? Are you considering the international market?
- Do you have access to databases of potential students/customers? If so, specify the databases.
- What are the relevant social, social, professional, or industry organizations for outreach and networking purposes?
- What are the best methods of reaching/communicating with the target market?
- What instructional delivery methods (e.g., online, hybrid, or in-person) are appropriate for the market? Explain.

B. Competition

- What universities or entities, have already developed or deliver the program (i.e., your competitors)? Where are they located? For each, describe the enrollment of these programs – e.g., the number of students/participants.
- Describe your competitors’ successes and/or failures.
- What is the competitor’s price (program or course fees)? How are your proposed program/course fees going to compare to your competitors?
- What are your competitive advantages or disadvantages for the proposed program? How will you overcome any disadvantages?
- For each competitor, what instructional delivery methods do they use - face to face, hybrid, completely online?

Note that a central part of the CIES Special Session Program Proposal document is a detailed market analysis and report – see Section IV of the Special Session Program Proposal Template.
Step 3. Prepare Proposal Documents and Garner Approval

Before a new idea is implemented, and before marketing a program and beginning to recruit students, there are a number of approvals that need to be in place. This will involve you developing the required proposals for various units and committees in order to get their approval. CIES will work closely with you to understand and attain the necessary approvals, meet frequently to discuss the approval status, and provide guidance if there are challenges or questions that arise during the approval process.

A. Prepare Proposal(s) Required by Academic Affairs

CIES requires new programs to follow the same approval process as any other program on campus. In your discussions with Undergraduate Studies or Graduate Studies (from Step 1), you should have determined whether or not you need to follow-through with additional procedures (e.g., curriculum review) for your program to be approved within academic affairs.

Following is a general description of the approval process, but it is important to check with Undergraduate/Graduate Studies for any deviation. Each college has a curriculum committee or curriculum coordinator responsible for the approval process for new courses, certificates, credit-based programs and degree programs. Depending upon the type of credit and the scope of the program, approval may follow different procedures. Typically, curricular modifications are first reviewed by the Department Curriculum Committee and Department Chair, then the College Curriculum Committee, College Dean, then either the Undergraduate or Graduate Curriculum committee of the university, and finally the approval of the AVP for either Undergraduate Studies or Graduate Studies. See

http://www.sjsu.edu/gradstudies/curriculum/newdegreeprograms/index.html
http://www.sjsu.edu/gradstudies/curriculum/certificateprograms/

B. Prepare Proposal(s) Required by CSU and/or WASC

As stated earlier, if you are developing a NEW degree program, includes a substantive change to an existing degree program, or will be offered more than 25 miles from campus, you will need to seek WASC and/or CSU Office of the Chancellor approval. See

http://www.calstate.edu/app/program_dev.shtml
http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/faculty/curriculum/guide/substantive/

C. Prepare Proposal Form Required by CIES

CIES wants to have a comprehensive understanding of your proposed program to ensure its viability and long term success. You will need to be able to address key questions such as “What are the program’s goals?”, “How will you administer the program?”, “What is the program structure (courses and instruction)?,” “Does it have a
robust market for the short and long terms?” “Do you have a good financial model”? We have developed a template for your proposal – see Special Session Program Proposal Template. Note that if you develop program proposals for the Academic Affairs Division (e.g., C&R, undergraduate/graduate affairs) – the content from those proposals could be easily copied to the CIES Program Proposal document.

D. Prepare a Financial Model

Special sessions are self-supporting with fees set by the campus to cover the costs of instruction and other services. Thus it is critical that a program has a financial plan or model that supports the launch and ongoing operations of the program. The plan should delineate revenues and costs for the initial launch and at least 2 (two) years thereafter. CIES will require a copy of your market analysis so we may interpret your data to determine adequacy of fit into a self-support model.

The Department/College along with CIES will serve as the primary architects of the final budget. In addition to “standard” costs such as faculty or staff pay and benefits, be sure to consider unique costs. Some costs that we have encountered in the past include the purchase of studio or laboratory supplies, facility rental fees, staff support time (e.g., admissions, administration, etc.), program coordination costs (mailings, release time, etc.), parking fees, or catering expenses. The point here is to identify any expense which will need to be accounted for in the final budget.

To prepare your financial model, meet with your department/college analyst as well as CIES (Associate Dean and Finance Director) to review the requirements. CSU policies require that self-support programs cover all of their operating costs; therefore, it is not possible to approve a program that cannot or is not likely to cover operating costs. Note that a central part of the CIES Special Session Program Proposal document is a financial plan – see Section V of the Special Session Program Proposal Template to understand the requirements for the financial proposal. In addition, see the Fee Proposal section of the Administration and Finance (F&A) division website for information on their requirements for setting up fees associated with your proposed program. Specifically, you will need to complete the Executive Summary and submit with your Special Session Program Proposal Template and CIES Program Review Form.
Step 4. Launch Your Program

Depending upon the nature and scope of your program (e.g., an entire graduate degree program vs. a grouping of courses) numerous tasks will need to be implemented to smoothly and efficiently launch your program. These include:

- Marketing the program
- Recruiting students
- Setting up the application process
- Reviewing applications
- Setting up program accounts
- Identifying instructional faculty and preparing contract and payroll documents
- Recruiting program staff members
- Setting up courses and enabling registration
- Designing and developing the courses
- Coordinating facilities requirements
- Ongoing monitoring of enrollments and the budget to ensure success as a self-support program
- Ongoing student support and advising

As part of the initial program planning, you will likely already have discussed the respective responsibilities of your department or college and that of other organizational units, including CIES. As we will be working closely together during the program launch, CIES will serve as a resource to provide assistance on tasks/responsibilities you and/or your staff may be handling for the first time.

Getting Assistance and Providing Feedback

If you have additional questions about special session programming, or would like to give us feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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