

Contact: Rachel Boon

**REQUEST TO SUSPEND ADMISSIONS TO THE MASTER OF STUDIES IN LAW AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

Action Requested: Approve the request by the University of Iowa to suspend admissions to the Master of Studies in Law in the College of Law.

The Council of Provosts and Board office staff reviewed the proposal and recommend approval.

Description of program. The Master of Studies in Law (M.S.L.) program is a 30-credit graduate degree program offered by the University of Iowa College of Law. It was developed by the faculty of the College of Law in 2015 to educate students and professionals in other fields who do not wish to practice law but who need to recognize and respond effectively to legal issues arising in their work. The M.S.L. program was intended to be a small-scale revenue-neutral or revenue-positive program of study that would utilize existing courses to provide professionals with an overview of the legal system as a whole and an introduction to some of the legal issues they are likely to confront in their fields. Students take courses in the College of Law alongside juris doctorate (J.D.) students; there are no dedicated M.S.L. courses. Students may complete the M.S.L. degree in 1-4 years of study. Under the accrediting body's standards, credits earned in the M.S.L. program are not transferrable to the J.D. degree. Completion of the M.S.L. degree does not qualify graduates for the practice of law.

The M.S.L. program is overseen by a faculty director with the support of an advisory committee. Currently, there are five students enrolled in the program.

Reason for proposed suspension. The M.S.L. program was developed as a pilot to explore opportunities to expand the College of Law's educational outreach to the state of Iowa and develop alternate revenue models. As a pilot program, that goal was achieved. The College of Law learned substantial information from operating this at-the-time innovative program. The experience gained from operating this program indicates that it lacks long-term viability in its current form. The College of Law seeks to temporarily suspend new admissions in the program as it assesses long-term educational and revenue-generating strategies that may or may not include the M.S.L. program.

In 2021, the College of Law conducted a self-study that included a detailed assessment of the M.S.L. program. The self-study found that the small size of the program (1-5 students/year, with an average of 2.5 students/year) was disproportionate to the resources required to support it. Among other things, the subcommittee found that on a per-capita basis, resource usage for M.S.L. students tends to be greater than for J.D. students due to needs for individualized registration, financial aid portfolios, and instructional support, as well as the requirement of maintaining a program infrastructure even as per-capita tuition revenue is substantially less. Although costs for the M.S.L. program are not separately tracked by finance personnel, a conservative estimate of core costs found that they exceeded the tuition revenue generated by the program. While some measures were identified and implemented to reduce costs arising from individual customization, the reality is that 2-3 students-per-year in a master's degree program is not cost-effective. In addition, the self-study committee discussed barriers to student success identified through program operation that would need to be addressed if the program continued. The self-study committee also discussed the potential for increasing enrollment in the program but concluded that this was unlikely to succeed absent radical change given the low applicant interest in the program as it currently exists. The self-assessment subcommittee did not view program

continuation in its current form as a viable option given the revenue-negative nature of the program.

Effect on current students. The suspension the program will not affect students currently admitted to the program. Students currently in the program will be provided with the opportunity to complete their studies, and the Program Director will continue to provide support until they have completed their degrees or withdraw from the program. Under the existing program policy, admitted students must complete their studies within four years of matriculation. Four out of the five currently enrolled students were expected to receive their degrees in December 2022.

Application, Enrollment and Completion Trends.

	Applications	Enrollment	Completions
2021-22	5	3	0
2020-21	6	2	2
2019-20	5	5	4
2018-19	5	2	0
2017-18	3	1	1

Impact on resources. Because there are no dedicated personnel for this program, no faculty/staff reductions are envisioned. Rather, the effect of terminating the program will be to permit resources that are currently used to support it on a bespoke basis to be reallocated to more efficient uses that are linked to the College’s core programs and mission.

Impact on workforce. Due to the extremely small number of students who participate in the program, and the fact that some graduates obtain employment outside the state, the suspension of admission to the M.S.L. program is not anticipated to have any meaningful impact on workforce needs in the state.

Alternative programs. Drake University Law School, the only other law school in the state, offers an online asynchronous 24-credit Master of Jurisprudence (MJ) degree in Compliance and Risk Management in partnership with the Drake College of Business and Public Administration. This is a dedicated program focusing specifically on compliance and risk management. Drake Law School also offers a 24-credit MJ degree in “Individualized Studies.” A review of the Drake Law School’s 2022 graduation program indicates that 22 students received the MJ in Compliance and Risk Management and two students received the MJ in Individualized Studies that year.

The closest comparable program within the Regents system is the UI College of Law’s J.D. degree program. The J.D. is a three-year full-time degree. Graduates qualify to apply for admission to the practice of law. Enrollment in the College of Law’s J.D. program for the 2021-22 academic year was 500 students. The first-year class contained 161 students.

Effective date of termination. Upon approval by the Board of Regents.