

September 27-29, 2023

BOARD OF VISITORS ACTION FORM

FOR PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES REQUIRING BOV AND SCHEV APPROVAL

PROPOSAL TITLE:

New Degree Program – Master of Legal Studies (MLS) in Law
with concentrations in Compliance, Finance, Healthcare, Environment, and Emerging
Technology

PURPOSE OF PROPOSAL:

The Master of Legal Studies (MLS) in Law degree is proposed as a new program with an anticipated Fall 2024 implementation. Proposals for new programs must be submitted to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) for review and approval. Prior to SCHEV submission, Board of Visitors action is required.

APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE:

Academic Affairs

BRIEF NARRATIVE:

The Master of Legal Studies (MLS) in Law degree program is designed for non-law professionals who want to gain an understanding of the U.S. legal system to improve their performance in law-related job responsibilities, understand industry legal challenges, and expand their career opportunities. The program consists of a core of general law courses for non-lawyers followed by courses in specific concentrations to provide students with greater specialization and expertise. The program will launch with two concentrations: compliance and finance. If successful, additional concentrations will be offered in the future. Graduates of the MLS program will be equipped to navigate complex legal issues, make informed decisions within their respective fields, and better manage risk for their organizations, leading to greater compliance with Virginia regulations.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Faculty and Staff

No faculty hiring is anticipated in support of this program. Current regular and adjunct faculty will be utilized to develop and teach courses. The hiring of 1 FTE staff will be required in year 1 with the launch and admissions to the program. Further staff hiring is not anticipated until enrollment growth supports further hiring.

Revenue

Year 1 will be revenue negative, year 2 will be revenue neutral, with the program becoming revenue positive after year two, based on conservative projected enrollments.

DUPLICATION INFORMATION:

George Mason University offers a Juris Master degree with a concentration in Financial & Commercial Services that is similar, though not exactly the same, as the proposed MLS. The key difference between the two is in the general curriculum requirements. William & Mary's MLS degree requires an ethics course as well as courses in Business Associations and Regulatory Law. The George Mason University program does not require any of these courses.

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**WILLIAM & MARY
RESOLUTION TO APPROVE A MASTER
OF LEGAL STUDIES IN LAW DEGREE**

WHEREAS, the Faculty of the William & Mary Law School proposes to offer a graduate program that will confer a Master of Legal Studies (M.L.S.) in Law degree starting in August 2024; and,

WHEREAS, this graduate program has been developed by faculty members in the Law School and is supported by the Law School's senior administration; and,

WHEREAS, the proposal has received approval from the Law School Faculty on May 12, 2023; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed program is designed for non-law professionals who want to gain an understanding of the U.S. legal system to improve their performance in law-related job responsibilities, understand industry legal challenges, and expand their career opportunities. The program consists of a core of general law courses for non-lawyers followed by courses in specific concentrations to provide students with greater specialization and expertise. The program will launch with two concentrations: compliance and finance, with additional concentrations planned for the future. Graduates will have a working knowledge of the foundations of law and basic legal concepts, and they will understand and navigate laws and regulations that apply to their operations and industry. Graduates will understand when and how to interact with legal counsel to manage legal risks; and,

WHEREAS, this program will utilize the core competencies of the Faculty of the Law School, who have the expertise to teach and shepherd this program successfully;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that upon recommendation of the President and the Provost, the Board of Visitors approves the creation of a Master of Legal Studies in Law program, which will be taught and administered by the Faculty of the Law School.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the university will create this new program in compliance with all requirements of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).