

**OPERATING AUTHORITY TO OFFER LOWER DIVISION PROGRAM  
AND ADMIT FRESHMAN STUDENTS AT GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** Governors State University (the University or GSU) requests authority to begin offering a Lower Division Program to admit freshman students in fall 2014. Curricula for the proposed program will meet the General Education Core Curriculum requirements that were established and maintained by the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). The student clientele will enter in cohorts of full-time, day-time students who will pay tuition and fees (many will be supported by the state's financial aid and Pell grant) that will make the program self-supporting. The admitted students will make use of the University's underutilized facilities and equipment during mornings and afternoons as current students come to the campus late in the afternoons, in the evenings/nights, and on weekends.

The University was established in 1969 as an Upper Division institution to admit only students who were ready to begin their junior year at the University. A similar Upper Division public University, Sangamon State University, now the University of Illinois at Springfield, was established in 1969 as well. The University of Illinois at Springfield proposed the addition of lower division instruction through the Capital Scholars Program which was approved by the IBHE on October 5, 1999.

The President of the University, Dr. Elaine P. Maimon (President), is committed to overseeing the implementation of this initiative. During her tenure as Provost and the Chief Operating Officer at Arizona State University-West campus, the campus accepted its first freshman class, organized into cohorts, a model similar to the University's proposal. She was also responsible for the implementation of living/learning communities in the student residencies.

The program will contribute to increasing the number of baccalaureate degree holders in Illinois commensurate with the goal of expansion of degree attainment to address the priorities of *The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success* and the recommendations of Complete College America.

**Action Requested:** That the Illinois Board of Higher Education authorize Governors State University to offer the proposed Lower Division Program to admit freshman students subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in the proposal and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**OPERATING AUTHORITY TO OFFER LOWER DIVISION PROGRAM  
AND ADMIT FRESHMAN STUDENTS AT GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY**

*Projected Enrollments and Degrees.* Governors State University has projected that approximately a cohort of 270 full-time freshman students will be enrolled in the proposed program to offer Lower Division Instruction in fall 2014, the first year, and up to approximately 625 freshmen in 2020 with an estimated retention of 80 percent from freshman to sophomore. It is expected that even if only 100 to 150 freshmen are enrolled at the beginning, the program would be financially successful. Also, the University has estimated that approximately 157 bachelor's degrees will be awarded in the fifth year of the program and approximately 372 six year average degrees will be conferred by 2026. The estimated six year average for the proposed program is equivalent to a 62 percent graduation rate over six years compared to the 50 percent graduation rate of public universities' freshman students in 2009.

**Background**

Governors State University (the University or GSU) requests authority to begin offering a Lower Division Program to admit freshman students in fall 2014. Curricula for the proposed program will meet the General Education Core Curriculum requirements that were established and maintained by the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). The targeted student clientele will be only cohorts of full-time, day-time students who will pay tuition and fees (many will be supported by the state's financial aid and Pell grant) that will make the program self-supporting. The admitted students will make use of the University's underutilized facilities and equipment during mornings and afternoons as current students come to the campus late in the afternoons, in the evenings/nights, and on weekends.

The University was established in 1969 as an Upper Division institution (to admit only students who were ready to begin their junior year at the University). A similar Upper Division public University, Sangamon State University, (now the University of Illinois at Springfield), was established in 1969. The University's Capital Scholars Program or lower division instruction was approved by the IBHE on October 5, 1999, after it met the IBHE staff recommendations and indicated its commitment to meeting the requirements of Public Act 86-0954 which stipulates that at least 15 high school coursework units in five categories including 4 years of English, 3 years of social studies, 3 years of mathematics, and 3 years of science. Governors State University has assured IBHE staff that if this program is approved by the Illinois Board of Higher Education, it will implement all the requirements of Public Act 86-0954. The University and Sangamon State University were the only two public universities created as Upper Division institutions by the Illinois General Assembly and now Governors State University is the only Upper Division institution in Illinois.

In fall 2010, the University enrolled a total of 5,660 graduate and undergraduate students, including 4,043 women, and 1,617 men. By level, there were 2,993 undergraduates and 2,667 graduate students. The University currently offers 52 degree programs consisting of 21 baccalaureate programs, 26 master's programs, one post master's program, and five doctoral programs. The 21 existing bachelor's programs encompass many fields, including programs in education, liberal arts and sciences, psychology, business and management, and health program fields. The top three most popular disciplines in fall 2010 were business, management, marketing, and related support services with 533 students; liberal arts and

sciences, and general studies and humanities with 504 students; and health professions and related programs with 405 students. There is a plan to increase the number of baccalaureate programs during the next six years by at least 23 new programs in selected needed academic majors. The list of the expected new programs includes public administration, global studies, history, economics, entrepreneurship, political science, and environmental studies.

Governors State University's leadership in the Dual Degree Program initiative (DDP) is recognized nationally. Dr. Martha J. Kanter, the U.S. Under Secretary of Education, selected GSU as an "island of excellence." She said that the University is "going to shine a spotlight on the Dual Degree Program" because it is "absolutely the right direction in which to go." In recognition of the leadership, recently, the University's President was invited to address the annual national conference of the American Association of Colleges & Universities about the Dual Degree Program and the University's success story.

The President of the University, Dr. Elaine P. Maimon (President), is committed to oversee the implementation of this initiative. During her tenure as Provost and the Chief Operating Officer at Arizona State University-West campus, the university accepted its first freshman class of 249 students, organized into cohorts, a model similar to the University's proposal. She was also responsible for the implementation of living/learning communities in the student residencies. The President will be assisted in overseeing this initiative by the Provost, the Executive Vice President who has worked with the President at two other institutions prior to coming to Governors State University, and the Vice President who will oversee recruitment of freshman students. Together, these administrators have had very extensive campus administrative experiences at the University and at other higher education institutions. Virtually all new staff members recruited to launch the program have worked with lower division students at their previous institutions, including at community colleges.

The mission, goals, and objectives of the Lower Division Program is consistent and supports the University's mission and priorities. Also, they address all goals of *The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success*, particularly Goals 1, 2, and 3.

## **Need**

Governors State University is the only Illinois public university that does not offer instruction for freshman and sophomore students. The University of Illinois at Springfield, formerly Sangamon State University was created as an Upper Division institution just like the University but it was approved to offer instruction to lower division students in 1999. Nationally, nearly all upper division institutions have transitioned into four-year colleges and universities. As a result, the University is one of only a few institutions that do not offer instruction to freshman and sophomore students. Although not yet fulfilled, offering instruction to first and second year students continues to be an important mission of the University and the University believes now is the right time to implement it. Already, the University serves some of its transfer students who are admitted through the Illinois Articulation Initiative but they did not complete all their lower division curricular requirements as needed. The proposed Lower Division Program will build upon this experience and existing curricula.

The University has indicated that an acceptably low number of students who begin college at community colleges complete baccalaureate programs. For example, it is estimated that only 15 percent of the students in at least one of the University's surrounding counties attain bachelor's degrees. Other counties in the region do better to varying degrees with up to 50 percent of the students earning bachelor's degrees. The proposed program designed for full-time students would be more successful in getting its students to complete their baccalaureate programs much faster than students who begin college at community colleges, thus contributing to meeting the state's priority for more degree program

completers. Furthermore, without a public university offering Lower Division Instruction in the South Metro Higher Education Region, the University's home region, students in the region are deprived of the opportunity to be admitted as freshmen at the University. No other Higher Education Region in the state has this disadvantage to students in its region who do not want to go to community colleges but prefer to go to a "local" lower tuition public university. Probably because of a lack of option for freshman students at a nearby campus, the University currently loses a significant number of potential freshman students to Purdue-Calumet, the closest 4-year institution to Governors State University. While it is very important, this proposal is not intended to diminish the University's continued participation in admitting and educating transfer students because it expects that over 70 percent of its undergraduates will consist of transfer students. The University and its six community college partners actively participate in the nationally recognized Dual Degree Program and the University's commitment to the program will be sustained and expanded even when lower division instruction is implemented in order to continue to address the recommendation of Complete College America. If the proposed program is approved, the University's programmatic offerings, including the existing programs, will provide its students and prospective students with more choice and access, affordability, and success in higher education.

*The High School to College Success Report* of five community colleges (Joliet, Kankakee, Moraine Valley, Prairie State, and South Suburban) in the University's region documented that 6,709 students took the ACT examination and 2,236 of them entered community colleges from high school during a three-year period. Nearly 4,000 of the students were admitted to Illinois higher education institutions. The University has indicated that it is likely that some of these students would have applied and gained admission to the University if it admitted freshmen. Moreover, just as other public universities in the state attract and admit freshman students from out of state, the University would do the same if it is authorized to admit freshmen. Analysis of data from another source of college choices of students graduating from high schools in the University's service region indicate that there would be sufficient demand for this program from public high school students in the region. According to the analysis, almost 1,700 students per year attend college out of region at public universities other than the state's flagship public universities. It is reasonable to expect that some of these students would be interested in enrolling in the proposed program. Approximately ten percent of these students would meet the program's low threshold of needed freshmen in 2014. It is expected that the proposed program's proximity to their homes, affordability, and high quality would be beneficial and attractive to the students. By admitting students using the cohort model, it is expected that the cohort experiences will enhance students' sense of affiliation and belonging to their groups and the University and, therefore, have better retention and graduation rates.

Five letters of support for the proposed program were submitted by the Presidents of the four community colleges: Kankakee Community College, Moraine Valley College, Prairie State College, and Triton College, as well as the President of Lewis University, which are in close proximity to Governors State University. The letters provide strong support for the proposal and very positive statements about working with Governors State University and confidence in its leadership. In addition, the University received many positive and enthusiastic statements of support from the University community, including the Faculty Senate, the Student Senate, the Alumni Board, and Executive Board of the Civil Service Senate. Compared to these, statements of concerns about the proposal are minimal.

**Other justifications for Governors State University's proposal are:**

- The University has a plan for student housing expected to be ready in 2014, an added benefit to the targeted full-time students. In addition, to meet other needs of the prospective students, the University plans to expand its athletic and other co-curricular programs to provide the range of college experiences that contribute to attracting and retaining lower division students.

- Nearly 50 percent of Governors State University’s undergraduates are ethnic minorities, one of the underrepresented groups targeted for “aggressive action to meet the college achievement gap.” To meet the goals, all public universities should grow if possible in addition to increasing efficiency and effectiveness. The proposed program will enhance the University’s capacity to serve underrepresented groups and all other students.
- The population in the University’s service region is diverse and largely underserved and only 21 percent of adults have earned college degrees. Approximately eight percent of the population has a household income lower than the poverty level.
- The plan to inaugurate Lower Division Instruction at Governors State University will contribute to addressing *The Illinois Public Agenda’s* ambitious goal of 60 percent of adults with post secondary credentials by 2025 by addressing specifically Goals 1, 2, and 3 which stress closing the achievement gaps of underrepresented groups, making college affordable, and increasing the number of high quality postsecondary credentials. Also the plan will increase the University’s contributions to the Illinois Articulation Initiative, augment the commitment to Dual Degree Program, and address the recommendations of Complete College America.

### **Comparable Programs**

All Illinois public universities admit freshman students except Governors State University. The University of Illinois at Springfield, an Upper Division institution, was approved to offer lower division instruction in 1999. It is probable that soon there will not be another upper division college or university in the U.S. if the University’s proposal is approved. The fact that almost all upper division institutions like Governors State University have transitioned into four-year institutions indicates that the novel experiments with Upper Division institutions have failed to reach their full potentials.

### ***The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success***

This program to admit freshman students is designed to address all four goals of *The Illinois Public Agenda*, particularly Goals 1, 2, and 3. Goal 1, *Increase educational attainment to match the best-performing states*, will be addressed by admitting and educating freshman students that are not currently admitted at the University. A significant proportion of the students will come from underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities and students. Goal 2, *Ensure college affordability for students, families and taxpayers*, will be addressed through the University’s lowest tuition among undergraduate institutions in Illinois. It will save money for admitted students and concomitantly eliminate or reduce the amount of loans students will seek to complete their programs. Goal 3, *Increase the number of high quality post-secondary credentials to meet the demands of the economy and an increasingly global society*, will be addressed by educating and awarding baccalaureate degrees to more students within a relatively short time because the targeted students would attend college on a full-time basis compared to current undergraduate students at the University.

### **Mission and Objectives**

Mission and objectives of Governors State University’s proposal to offer Lower Division Instruction are to a) admit full-time freshman students using the student cohort model beginning in 2014, b) graduate admitted students within a much shorter time compared to current undergraduate part-time students, c) serve a diverse student body, reflecting the diverse population in the University’s service region at the lowest cost of any college or university in the state, d) make internships, undergraduate research, and service learning opportunities available to freshmen and sophomores, e) increase the number of bachelor’s degrees completed in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)

fields, and f) contribute to the state's priority to increase significantly the number of Illinois adults who have earned high quality college credentials. These objectives mirror to a great extent the objectives of the University of Illinois at Springfield's accomplishments when it was approved to admit freshman students by the IBHE in 1996. They support and are consistent with the University's mission and priorities.

### **Admission Requirements**

Admission requirements for applicants seeking to be admitted as freshman students in this program consists of a number of conditions, including a) submitting evidence of graduation from an accredited high school or submitting passing scores on the General Education Development (GED) test; b) present a satisfactory combination of class rank and ACT or SAT scores; and c) provide proof that he or she has completed the 15 set of high school courses stipulated in Public Act 86-0954: *High School Courses Required for Freshman Admission* at public universities based on the recommendation of the IBHE in 1993. Any admitted student who will need "light" remedial work will be assisted by an intensive bridge course in the summer preceding the freshman year, and then followed, if necessary, by course-integrated supplementary instruction during the fall semester of the first year so that the students would no longer need remedial work by the beginning of the sophomore year.

### **Program Description**

Governors State University seeks authorization to admit a cohort of full-time freshman students beginning in fall 2014. The proposed Lower Division Program is intended to give an alternative to a public university in the South Metro Higher Education Region so that students who live in the region would also benefit from attending an affordable public university, a benefit afforded to each public university's service region except to Governors State University. To meet the need of full-time students who would attend the University, plans are being developed and completed to build student housing for the anticipated freshman and sophomore students. Currently students enrolled at the University attend classes late in the afternoons, evenings, nights, and on weekends. As a result, there is significant underutilized facilities and equipment in the mornings and in the afternoons. These resources will be put to good use by the lower division students, thus increasing the University's efficiency and effectiveness. If this program is approved, it will enable the University recruit and educate many more undergraduates and contribute to meeting Illinois growing need for its residents with post-secondary credentials while continuing to actively participate in IAI and Dual Degree Programs.

Other attributes of the University's Lower Division Program include:

- Implementing the state's High School Courses Required for Freshman Admission stipulated by Public Act 86-0954 in 1993 for all public universities that admit freshman students;
- Reducing the number of students in the South Metro Region that attend college out of state;
- The University's tuition would be the lowest among all four-year colleges and universities in the state;
- No new state resources are needed to establish this program because costs for the program will be met by the tuition and fees to be paid by freshman and sophomore students;

- The University plans to implement about two dozen new baccalaureate programs in the near future to serve the targeted lower division students as well as transfer students as the student population grows;
- A plan is in progress to develop and build student housing that will accommodate the expected full-time freshman students enrolling in 2014; and
- Nearly all of the University's undergraduate programs in fields with specialized accreditation are already accredited, and those that are not in the process of being accredited or submitting accreditation applications.

### **Assessment of General Education Outcomes in the Second Year**

Governors State University is engaged in an Assessment Academy project that focuses on student writing. At the same time, the University's newly formed Committee on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes is beginning to work with faculty using the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) rubric on oral proficiency to evaluate student work. To examine the usefulness of the association's rubrics, the University's faculty is working with members of the South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium in the region. In researching for national best practices, the University found that a great majority of campuses use the AAC&U rubrics to varying degrees. Additionally, a few degree programs at the University have implemented the Collegiate Learning Assessment instrument to assess and improve their curricula. These steps indicate that if this proposal is approved by IBHE, the University will be prepared and ready to assess general education outcomes for its freshmen and sophomores and other aspects of its undergraduate education.

### **Accreditation**

Governors State University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association. It was first accredited by the HLC predecessor, the North Central Association, in 1975. The most recent full HLC accreditation in 2009 covers ten years. In addition, the policy of the University's Board of Trustees requires that each degree program that can be accredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized specialized accreditation body, should seek such accreditation. Accordingly, all undergraduate and graduate degree programs for which specialized accreditation is available are accredited with the exception of Art which is in self-study process with the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. The many accredited degree programs are in the University's College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business and Public Administration, College of Health and Human Services, and the College of Education.

### **Fiscal and Personnel Resources**

No new state resources are needed to implement Governors State University's Lower Division Program because the program will be adequately funded by the tuition and fees (Income Fund) freshman and sophomore students will pay at the current estimated rate of \$823.00 per semester for a full-time student. The budget for the Lower Division Program is projected to grow from approximately \$2,245,104 in the first year to \$7,148,800 in the fifth year of operation. Estimated total expenditure in the first year is \$1,057,000 which is about 40 percent of the total income. In the fifth year, the estimated total expenditure is \$3,480,125 which is about 49 percent of the projected income. Estimated expenditures are lower than one half of the estimated incomes in the first and fifth years to be sure that they will not exceed available funds if the program is implemented. Direct instruction personnel is the single highest expenditure category. It is projected to cost \$424,500 in the first year and \$2,023,125 in the fifth year.

Other major expenditure groups in the budgets are: other personnel costs; library materials, supplies, etc; facility-related costs; and other costs.

### **Facilities (space, equipment, instructional materials)**

Existing University facilities, including classrooms, laboratories, library, online resources, and equipment are currently underutilized by undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at the University because most instructional activities to serve them take place after 4:00 p.m. and on weekends. There are currently 61 classrooms at the University. Additionally, the University plans to complete a bid process on a complete renovation and reconstruction of its teaching labs and research facilities which will add ten more classrooms to the existing number. The work is expected to be completed before the 2014 fall semester when the first freshman class is scheduled. Therefore, the expected freshman and sophomore students should be served well by existing resources. On top of the existing facilities, the University has a multi-use classroom building on the IBHE list of approved capital projects. When funded and constructed, the building will be a welcome addition to the University's facilities as it looks forward to expanding its educational offerings in the future with up-to-date and competitive facilities and equipment.

### **Library**

For more than 40 years, the University has developed strong library collections to support its instruction, most notably in the health sciences, education, and business disciplines. Well developed collections in the sciences, social sciences, social work, and technology have complemented the initial collections as new programs were established. These were augmented by purchase of multidisciplinary collections to support teaching and research. Current holdings that support upper division and graduate programs will also meet the needs of advanced lower division students. Governors State University is a member of the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) which makes the rich holdings of Illinois' academic libraries accessible to the University's students, faculty, and staff.

The 50,000 e-journals in the existing collection will meet most lower division curricular needs of the program and other existing programs at the University. However, in planning to implement the Lower Division Instruction, the University's librarians identified key areas in the current collection that need attention and funding. They include adding textbooks, basic science materials, foreign language materials, social sciences materials, and e-books to the collection. Also, additional materials to be acquired include more popular magazines and newspapers, such as *Readers' Guide*, *Current Contents* in subject indexes (*Art Index*, *Social Science Index*, *Humanities Index*, *General Science Index*), as well as expanding and updating the collection of subject encyclopedias and general overview texts.

To meet the additional library resources, the University has budgeted \$63,500 in the first year and \$200,000 in the fifth year. Funds will also be budgeted annually in the second through fourth years. Any unforeseen library needs of the University will be addressed by additional library funds.

### **Meeting Other Student Needs**

Other needs of the expected freshman and sophomore students, such as student housing, student health services, student recreation center, and intramural sports will be met by the University. The University has been planning to design, develop, and operate an on-campus housing complex to be funded by a bond. After approval by the Board of Trustees in August 2011, the University has contracted with a Chicago architectural firm to develop site and schematic plans and preliminary cost estimates for a housing complex. It is expected that a part of the complex will be completed and ready for about 300 beds for occupancy by August 2014.

Governors State University is cognizant of the need to develop campus-based health services for its planned full-time students to be ready in 2014. A white paper on best practices is under development, taking into account the University's strong health and human services degree programs. It does not have to start from scratch because there are already public speech and counseling clinics in operation. Also, several departments in health-related fields are providing screening, education, and full services to children and family members at the University's Family Development Center. To address the unmet health needs, faculty members in health disciplines have expressed strong interest in working with regional healthcare providers to build a combined student and community, campus-based health services. The University is open to exploring the plan and other alternatives in preparation for the delivery of student health services in fall 2014.

Existing Recreation Center and outdoor recreational facilities of the University are adequate to address the additional recreational and intramural sports needs of students in the proposed Lower Division Program. The Center consists of facilities for basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer, and a Fitness Center for swimming, racquetball, and other activities. These facilities are currently underutilized and they should meet the needs of the expected full-time students. Additionally, building on its most successful table tennis program, ranked fourth nationally, the University is planning to develop and offer over the next several years a number of low-cost athletic programs that emphasize life-long sports/exercises such as basketball, cross-country, golf, track and field, and volleyball. Last but not least, the University plans to expand its participation in intercollegiate academic competitions by initiating a debate team.

### **Faculty and Staff**

To complement the strengths and disciplinary expertise of its existing faculty members, Governors State University plans to hire an additional 10 full-time equivalent (FTE) direct instructional personnel in the first year of implementing the proposed program, increasing to at least 42 FTE by the fifth year of operation. Also, a total of four FTE staff who will work in a variety campus functions will be hired in the first year, increasing to 9.5 FTE in the fifth year. These groups of personnel will comprise staff who will work in areas such as librarians, recruiters, advisors, admission staff, campus police, student life, facilities staff, and business office support service staff. It is expected that these faculty and other personnel working together with the University's current personnel, will meet the needs of the existing students as well as the new Lower Division students. Since the projected income, consisting of tuition and fees for the proposed program, significantly exceed projected expenditures in the first and the fifth years, any unfunded need of the program will be addressed with the unspent income.

### **Program Information**

Governors State University has provided the necessary information to support its proposal to offer Lower Division Instruction beginning in fall 2014, including information about its tuition, freshman admission requirements, new faculty and staff to be hired, projected budgets, facilities, including library resources, student housing, student health services, and student recreation facilities. Some of this information will be published on the University's website, [www.govst.edu](http://www.govst.edu). Comparable information about the program will be published in the University's Catalog. Similar or additional information may be available from the offices of the Provost, Admissions, Registrar, Deans, and Student Housing upon request.

### **Staff Conclusion**

The staff concludes that the Lower Division Program proposed by Governors State University will provide Illinois students additional opportunity for full-time, residential freshman students for a four-year education at a public university not currently available in the South Metro Higher Education Region

where the University is located. The program will contribute to increasing the number of baccalaureate degree holders in Illinois commensurate with the goal of expansion of degree attainment to address the priorities of *The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success* and the recommendations of Complete College America.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

*The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby resolves that Governors State University is authorized to offer the proposed Lower Division Program to admit freshman students subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in its proposal and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.*

