

## MU in the Evening Program Committee Final Report and Recommendations

This was a specially formed committee which was charged with examining the MU in the Evening Program from both academic and business perspectives and to recommend changes which would improve the accessibility and use of the program as well as increasing revenues to the University from the program. The Committee met a number of times during the Academic Year 2008-2009 and had very productive discussions. These discussions resulted in the following recommendations. Summary of the discussion followed by recommendation in **bold**.

### Recommendation One

There is concern that the program puts too much emphasis on in-person courses when students are more and more looking for ways to take courses online. This is particularly true of one of the core groups which the program was intended to reach—persons employed in regular working hours who wish to take courses which can fit into their life schedules. This group is more likely to seek online courses, particularly asynchronous courses, than to take an evening or weekend course in person.

**Expanding the MU in the Evening Program to include both synchronous and asynchronous online courses would increase the potential user pool and would allow for greater ability to provide courses at times that those users would find convenient. This reflects the committee view that there is a good delivery model in place that needs more emphasis on multiple modes of delivery rather than more degree programs.**

### Recommendation Two

There is concern that the potential student pool, which was large when MU in the Evening started, has dwindled for a number of reasons, including: 1] competition from departments offering their courses on their own in non-traditional hours; 2] exhaustion of the initial pool of staff at whom the MU in the Evening program initially targeted due to their completion of degrees via the program; 3] competition from the other programs of MU offering courses in non-traditional ways; and 4] competition from other institutions of higher learning, particularly those offering degrees completely online. Here the committee noted that, in part, the success of MU in the Evening in reaching one of its primary targeted consumer pools has resulted in a decreased number of potential new users. This issue led to a lengthy discussion about how to access a larger pool of potential users for the program.

**There were several approaches recommended in relation to potential for new customers. First, MU in the Evening might consider shifting from emphasis on complete degree offering to degree completion thus reaching persons who have partial required hours for a degree. Second, in the graduate education arena, shift to providing post-degree certification programs and licensure required CEO offerings for professionals. In particular, provision of licensure CEO offerings would guarantee an ongoing pool of customers as licensure demands yearly evidence of educational engagement.**

### Recommendation Three

There was extensive discussion of the problem of fragmentation in how non-traditional courses and other non-traditional educational offerings are provided. Faculty and administrators may see MU in the Evening as competitive with their own department or with another specialized group offering ways for non-traditional students and other customers to obtain University credits and other University-based educational opportunities. This also gives the appearance that MU in the Evening is not revenue neutral for a department which works through it and creates faculty resistance due to misperceptions that this would create cost to the department.

**This problem could be addressed through administrative action through the Provost's Office to achieve greater coordination/integration among various programs and departments in how educational offerings are made available beyond traditional days/hours. In addition, Deans and Directors should be encouraged to address the revenue/cost issues more fully with faculty so as to avoid misperceptions of cost to departments from utilizing programs like MU in the Evening.**

#### Recommendation Four

Part of the work of the committee was to survey faculty to determine attitudes toward programming for non-traditional students/customers and working in non-traditional days/hours and non-traditional methods/modes. Although faculty respondents in general support use of new technologies to support education, there is strong bifurcation among them regarding the push to serve non-traditional students, especially those who wish to return to education in mid-life. On one hand, many faculty members responded that their programs already teach a lot of courses in evenings, weekends, and via electronic technology and wondered why they were being asked about this. They seemed to assume that all programs do this and saw no real issues related to faculty loads, impact on student body; or any other aspect of such offerings. On the other hand, there was an almost equally strong set of responses that were very negative about offering any type of programming for non-traditional students. These faculty members felt that persons wanting to return to undergraduate education in mid-life had already had their chance and would dilute the student body. They felt that persons seeking graduate education should be willing to make the sacrifices needed to become traditional students as that is the correct way to learn. These faculty members saw non-traditional teaching assignments as impositions which are inconsistent with their views of university teaching.

**The Provost's Office may need to make additional efforts to work with Deans and Department Chairs to address the ways in which non-traditional educational programs and modes can have positive impacts on the departments. This might be done through Provost's breakfasts with specific departments or sets of faculty. Because there are departments which offer much of their curriculum in both traditional and non-traditional modes, faculty and administrators from these departments could be a resource for efforts to bring other departments on board for such expansions of operations. In addition, the Provost's staff and the Deans' Council needs to have a thorough discussion of whether to integrate non-traditional programming into all departmental programs.**

#### Recommendation Five

This committee also shared the concern of the Staff Council at MU that the University Human Resources department does not give recognition to staff who have earned the General Studies degree through MU in the Evening. Here the system policy seems to be in direct contradiction to the one of the original and continuing purposes of the MU in the Evening program: to provide a way for MU staff employees to obtain a Bachelor's degree so that they would be able to have greater mobility in the employment system

**The Provost's Office should work with the Human Resources Department to ascertain what is actually the problem in this area and make corrections as needed.**

Finally, it is recommended that this committee be disbanded as it has fulfilled its charge to do a review of the MU in the Evening Program.

Where action on the recommendations in this report will entail policy changes, these should be referred to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Council which will work with the Provost's Office and other administrators to develop the needed policies which will support the implementation of the recommendations herein.