

## UM System-Wide eLearning Initiative: Future Desired State

This is a high-level summary overview of the UM System's submission to the Missouri Department of Higher Education's MoExcels RFP. Link: <https://dhe.mo.gov/initiatives/moexcels.php>

### **Vision Statement**

UM System will be the premier eLearning provider in Missouri and contiguous states in respect to the quality of programs, courses offered and the number of learners served. Our initial focus will be on adult and traditional learners to meet the workforce needs of the state of Missouri and beyond while reaching a goal of at least 25,000 new learners by 2025.

The University of Missouri System (UM) proposes a model to bring postsecondary education into the 21st century to benefit Missouri citizens and Missouri businesses. Because its four universities are distributed across the state and is recognized for excellence, UM is uniquely positioned to expand employer-driven education and strengthen workforce preparation in Missouri. By combining the UM's existing accomplishments with its capacity to scale the project across the state, UM will achieve unparalleled impacts in the state of Missouri.

UM will focus on training the 750,000 Missouri adults who have some college credit but have not received a degree. Actively engaging this audience requires innovative, industry-aligned pedagogy and curricula complemented by a comprehensive, virtual, high-touch, holistic support system for online learning. UM will actively collaborate with a Workforce Advisory Board (WAB) comprised of the education, business, information technology and healthcare sectors to develop agile programs and partnerships.

### **Addressing Missouri's workforce development needs**

The UM's proposal is drawn on the extensive data collected as part of the state of Missouri's *Best in Midwest* and *Talent for Tomorrow* initiatives and informed our strategy to offer fully online bachelor's degrees, stackable certificates and digital badges in business and information technology (B&IT). We project our approach will meet 43% of Missouri's workforce needs, 22,709 jobs annually across the state and in multiple "opportunity clusters," areas identified through economic analysis as key growth opportunities for Missouri. We have also identified opportunities in the health profession and education fields, accounting for another 48% of workforce needs and 25,437 additional jobs. In sum, our proposal could substantially and meaningfully address Missouri's workforce needs in a comprehensive way that is unique to UM.

In developing this proposal to align with our commitment to building a model driven by employer and state workforce needs, the UM received statements from 17 employers and Chambers of Commerce across the state expressing their support for UM's proposed program. This employer engagement, facilitated by the WAB, will enable us to sustain the program and ensure it remains relevant into the foreseeable future.

### **Creating a Center of Excellence in Workforce Development in Online Learning**

In order to support these learners we must operate differently and build upon the already great work done by our four universities while supporting a different group of learners. To support these learners UM will develop a comprehensive set of support systems available to an exclusively online student. UM

representatives visited key institutions and conducted substantial research in an effort to understand best practices in providing online education. Additionally, UM has contracted EY-Parthenon to assist in developing online programs and student support services that are meaningful and cost-effective. Key elements of the Center of Excellence include:

Learner Success Coaches: Online learning, while more flexible, can present time management challenges inhibiting degree completion. UM will create and expand the availability of success coaches assigned to online learners at enrollment and providing comprehensive student support. Beyond providing bedrock administrative support, success coaches will proactively assist learners with goal-setting, learning strategies, and time management.

Data & Analytics: UM will develop a comprehensive set of proactive advising based on early-warning alerts correlated with student success. Coaches will receive alerts and contact the learner with just-in-time support, and can monitor academic performance and develop personal relationships with online learners through a heightened understanding of their individual circumstances.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): UM will leverage emerging AI capabilities to enhance the learner and faculty experience, with the goal of enhancing faculty and student interaction rather than replacing it. We will streamline the process of sorting and evaluating learner assignments that enable faculty to be more intentional and creative with their assignments. AI will also be used to answer learners' frequently asked questions, giving faculty, tutors and admissions staff time for more meaningful engagement.

Meaningful Online Communities: These communities allow learners to learn from each other as they work on key projects. Discipline-specific communities allow junior learners to gain valuable information on how to succeed in their discipline from peers approaching graduation. We will build discipline-specific learning communities to give online learners these advantages, regardless of their location.

Robust Career Placement Services: UM students will be able to access 100% virtual career fairs; interact with discipline-specific academic coaches/mentors; receive help and feedback as they develop their resumes; and to prepare and practice for job interviews. We will develop a portal by which learners can digitally collect and share their work with Missouri employers to demonstrate their readiness.

Experiential learning: Beyond integrating new online offerings with existing UM opportunities, we will develop micro- and traditional internship experiences for online learners. Micro-internships are low-stakes, accessible opportunities where learners assist employers with a small-to-mid sized project in exchange for experience and a small monetary payment.

## **Conclusion**

This proposal builds on UM's existing strengths and commitments to Missourians in all corners of the state. It creates new and stronger partnerships with industry that will facilitate agile and meaningful response to changing industry needs. It targets an untapped workforce, Missourians with some college but no credential. The proposal is holistic, offering industry-relevant on-line courses with comprehensive, individualized support for online learners from enrollment to successful career placement. The UM system is unique in its ability to reach the scale needed for impactful change to catalyze Missouri's workforce and economy.