

# Program Change Request

## New Proposal

Date Submitted: 03/12/25 2:26 pm

Viewing: : **Liberal Studies, BLS**

Last edit: 03/14/25 10:41 am

Changes proposed by: Jessica Followell

### In Workflow

1. U Program Review

2. Gen Ed Review

3. 1580-LAS\_A Head

4. KV Dean

5. University Librarian

6. COTE Programs

7. Provost

8. Senate EPC

9. Senate

10. U Senate Conf

11. Board of Trustees

12. IBHE

13. HLC

14. DMI

### Approval Path

1. 11/06/24 11:17 am  
Donna Butler  
(dbutler): Approved  
for U Program  
Review

2. 11/06/24 11:36 am  
Gretchen Pein  
Baloun (pein):  
Approved for 1580  
Head

3. 12/12/24 3:15 pm  
Stephen Downie  
(sdownie):  
Approved for KV  
Dean

4. 12/13/24 12:01 pm  
Tom Teper (tteper):  
Approved for  
University Librarian

5. 12/13/24 1:21 pm

Suzanne Lee  
(suzannel):  
Approved for COTE  
Programs

6. 12/16/24 1:33 pm  
Brooke Newell  
(bsnewell):  
Approved for  
Provost

7. 02/26/25 2:44 pm  
Barbara Lehman  
(bjlehman):  
Approved for  
Senate EPC

8. 03/07/25 1:57 pm  
Barbara Lehman  
(bjlehman): Rollback  
to Initiator

9. 03/14/25 11:59 am  
Donna Butler  
(dbutler): Approved  
for U Program  
Review

10. 03/14/25 1:52 pm  
Melissa Steinkoenig  
(menewell):  
Approved for Gen  
Ed Review

11. 03/17/25 10:49 am  
Gretchen Pein  
Baloun (pein):  
Approved for 1580-  
LAS\_A Head

12. 03/17/25 2:06 pm  
Stephen Downie  
(sdownie):  
Approved for KV  
Dean

13. 03/18/25 11:17 am  
Claire Stewart  
(clairest): Approved  
for University

Librarian  
14. 03/18/25 10:41 pm  
Suzanne Lee  
(suzannel):  
Approved for COTE  
Programs  
15. 03/19/25 8:07 am  
Brooke Newell  
(bsnewell):  
Approved for  
Provost

## Proposal Type

Proposal Type: Major (ex. Special Education)

## Administration Details

Official Program Name	Liberal Studies, BLS	
Diploma Title	Bachelor of Liberal Studies	
Sponsor College	Liberal Arts & Sciences	
Sponsor Department	LAS Administration	
Sponsor Name	Kristen Sackley	
Sponsor Email	sackley2@illinois.edu	
College Contact	Stephen R. Downie	College Contact Email
	sdownie@illinois.edu	
College Budget Officer	Michael Wellens	
College Budget Officer Email	wellens@illinois.edu	

If additional stakeholders other than the Sponsor and College Contacts listed above should be contacted if questions during the review process arise, please list them here.

Stephen R. Downie, Kristen Sackley, Jessica Followell

Does this program have inter-departmental administration?

No

## Effective Catalog Term

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Effective Catalog Term	Fall 2025
Effective Catalog	2025-2026

## Proposal Title

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Proposal Title (either Establish/Revise/Eliminate the Degree Name in Program Name in the College of XXXX, i.e., Establish the Bachelor of Science in Entomology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, include the Graduate College for Grad Programs)

Establish the Bachelor of Liberal Studies in Liberal Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Does this proposal have any related proposals that will also be revised at this time and the programs depend on each other? Consider Majors, Minors, Concentrations & Joint Programs in your department. Please know that this information is used administratively to move related proposals through workflow efficiently and together as needed. Format your response like the following "This BS proposal (key 567) is related to the Concentration A proposal (key 145)"

The Major proposal (key 1246) is related to the BLS Bachelor of Liberal Studies Degree proposal (key 1245), Global Perspectives Concentration proposal (key 1266), Health and Society Concentration proposal (key 1269), and Management Studies Concentration proposal (key 1270).

## Program Justification

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Provide a brief justification of the program, including highlights of the program objectives, and the careers, occupations, or further educational opportunities for which the program will prepare graduates, when appropriate.

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's (ILLINOIS) College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (LAS) proposes a new major, Liberal Studies, in a new degree, Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS), that aims to serve the growing population of adult learners who have completed some college but do not hold a bachelor's degree. The Liberal Studies major targets over 40 million U.S. adults who are "stopped-out" learners, many of whom are members of marginalized and underrepresented communities, by providing an accessible, flexible, and supportive pathway to a four-year degree. In doing this, the BLS aligns with both the university's Next 150 Strategic Plan and LAS' 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, underscoring a commitment to equity and inclusion, innovative learning, and workforce preparedness. Hereafter the Liberal Studies major in the Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree is referred to as the BLS program.

#### Why ILLINOIS?

ILLINOIS is at a pivotal moment in its history, facing the need to adapt to a rapidly changing educational landscape. As a leading public research university with a land-grant mission, ILLINOIS is committed to providing accessible, high-quality education and driving economic development through innovation and engagement. To meet these goals, the College of LAS is proposing an online bachelor's degree-completion program targeted at adult learners.

Adult learners, who often juggle work and family responsibilities, require flexible learning options that traditional on-campus programs cannot provide. By offering an online bachelor's degree-completion program, ILLINOIS can cater to this growing demand for lifelong learning and continuous reskilling, which is essential in today's knowledge economy.

Online education offers unprecedented accessibility and flexibility, allowing individuals who cannot relocate or adhere to a traditional academic schedule to pursue their educational goals. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for adult learners, enabling them to balance their studies with other life commitments.

Developing an online bachelor's degree-completion program aligns with ILLINOIS's vision and mission as a land-grant institution. It supports the university's commitment to innovation in teaching and learning, ensuring that education is accessible to a broader audience, including non-traditional students. By integrating online programs into the core missions of its academic colleges and departments, ILLINOIS can maintain its reputation as a preeminent public research university while expanding its reach and impact.

Additionally, Illinois House Bill 5464, effective in June 2022, requires state public universities and community colleges to develop and implement equity plans and practices to increase the access, retention, completion, and student loan repayment rates for minority students, rural students, adult students, women, and people with disabilities who are traditionally underrepresented in education programs and activities.

"Education is arguably the single most important factor in promoting social mobility and a thriving economy," said State Representative Katie Stuart (D-Edwardsville) and lead House sponsor of HB 5464. "Enhancing and refining the ability of the Illinois Board of Higher Education to ensure accountability and integrity at colleges and universities will help protect access to high quality education for all Illinoisans."

"To ensure that higher education remains a key pathway for success in Illinois, it is critical to understand both the challenges and the opportunities of advancing postsecondary diversity and inclusion," said State Senator Scott Bennett (D-Champaign) and lead Senate sponsor of HB 5464. "This law puts our state on track to becoming a more inclusive economy with equitable paths to opportunity for all, especially those facing barriers."

The BLS program directly supports an ILLINOIS effort to increase access and completion rates for underrepresented populations.

This is also a significant opportunity for ILLINOIS. Currently there are approximately 45,000 Illinois students enrolling in online undergraduate programs outside of the state of Illinois, leading to half a billion dollars leaving the state of Illinois annually. Expanding in the online education market allows ILLINOIS to tap into a new and largely untapped cohort of learners, increasing enrollment and revenue streams. It positions the university as a leader in providing flexible, innovative educational solutions that meet the needs of today's diverse student population. Additionally, by offering programs aligned with labor market needs, ILLINOIS can contribute to the economic development of the state and beyond, fulfilling its land-grant mission of driving societal progress through education and innovation.

#### Target Audience and Student Profiles

The BLS program is specifically designed to meet the needs of adult learners, typically aged 25-34, who are unable to attend traditional on-campus programs due to career and family commitments. These students may be working professionals, career changers, or individuals who experienced barriers to completing their education in a traditional format. While the proposal indicates that having a minimum of 12 credit hours of college coursework will be considered for admission, the program anticipates that many prospective BLS students will have earned around 30-60 transferrable credits from community colleges or prior four-year institutions but have not been able to complete their degrees, often due to work or caregiving responsibilities.

In higher education, "stopping out" refers to students temporarily pausing their studies with the intention of returning later, rather than permanently dropping out. The primary reasons for stopping out are largely non-academic. The most common reason is work obligations, with 25% of respondents needing to focus on work or increase their working hours. Emotional stress and mental health issues are also significant, cited by nearly 23% of respondents. Health-related problems, either personal or family related, were mentioned by 18% of respondents. Financial

problems, either personal or family-related, were mentioned by 16% of respondents. Financial constraints, such as unexpected living expenses, running out of savings, or issues with loans and scholarships, also play a crucial role. Additionally, time constraints from balancing multiple roles often lead to the need for breaks in studies.

It is important to note that the “stop out” phenomenon significantly impacts various populations in the United States, particularly Black, Latinx, and other underrepresented groups. Research indicates that Black students experience notably higher stop-out rates compared to their white counterparts. Approximately 50% of Black students who begin a bachelor’s degree do not complete it within six years. This alarming statistic is often attributed to a combination of financial barriers, lack of institutional support, and systemic challenges that disproportionately affect them. Similarly, Latinx students face significant obstacles, with around 45% failing to finish their bachelor’s degrees within the same timeframe. Much like their Black peers, many Latinx students encounter financial hardships and insufficient academic support, which can hinder their ability to persist in their studies. Other marginalized populations, including first-generation college students, also experience high stop-out rates, estimated to be around 40-60%. These students often navigate the complexities of higher education without the benefit of family experience, adding to their challenges and increasing the likelihood of temporarily stepping away from their academic pursuits. The CAEL (CAEL Stopping Out Report, 2024) report highlights that men are more likely to stop out than women, and parents, especially those with dependent children, are more likely to stop out compared to those without children.

Overall, the CAEL report and other national surveys underscore that stopping out is often due to external pressures rather than academic difficulties, suggesting that higher education institutions need to adapt to better support the unique needs of adult learners. Members of this student population have the academic skillset to succeed and the motivation to attend a premier institution like ILLINOIS. But these learners require an online, asynchronous, and flexible degree program that integrates seamlessly with their lives to be successful.

#### Motivations of the Online Degree-Completion Student

Adult learners pursuing online degree-completion programs often have diverse motivations and backgrounds. The CAEL report and national data highlight several key personas and their reasons for returning to education:

- **Career Changers** are individuals looking to transition into new industries or roles. They benefit from the program’s adaptability and skills-based curriculum, which allows them to acquire new skills and knowledge relevant to their desired fields. These learners are motivated by the need to shift their careers into areas that offer better opportunities or align more closely with their passions.
- **Working Professionals (Go-Getters)** seek career advancement without interrupting their work commitments. They appreciate the asynchronous course structure, which enables them to balance their studies with their job responsibilities. These individuals are driven by the desire to enhance their leadership, data analysis, and critical thinking skills, aiming to climb the career

ladder and secure higher-level positions within their current fields.

- Second Chance Learners are those who faced obstacles in completing a traditional degree and now have an opportunity to finish their education in a supportive and accessible format. For these students, completing their degree represents a significant personal achievement and a second chance at success. They are motivated by the desire to overcome past challenges and fulfill their educational goals.

Online degree-completion programs cater to the unique needs of adult learners, providing the flexibility and support necessary to balance education with other life commitments. By understanding the motivations and personas of these students, institutions can better design programs that help them achieve their educational and career goals. Whether they are career changers, working professionals, or second chance learners, adult students benefit from the adaptability, skills-based curriculum, and supportive environment that online programs offer.

The BLS program anticipates that many enrollees will have between 30 and 60 hours of previous college credits, reflecting a mix of community college and four-year institution backgrounds. These credits, which transfer readily into the BLS program, expedite degree completion, and make the program affordable and efficient.

#### Part-Time Enrollment & Financial Aid for Illinois Learners

National education data shows that adult learners typically enroll part-time, therefore the BLS program anticipates most students will take approximately 15 credits per year, enabling them to balance education with work and family life while building career-relevant skills. For part-time online learners in Illinois, both federal and state financial aid options are available, although there are limits on how many semesters or credit hours can be funded.

Federal aid includes Pell Grants and Direct Loans. Pell Grants, awarded based on financial need, can be received for up to 12 semesters, with part-time students needing at least 6 credit hours (half-time) to qualify. Direct Loans, available to eligible part-time students, have annual and lifetime caps, so students must monitor their remaining eligibility.

In Illinois, state-specific aid, such as the Monetary Award Program (MAP) Grant, provides funding for students with financial need enrolled in at least 3 credit hours. Additional grants for veterans and National Guard members, like the Illinois Veterans' Grant (IVG) and Illinois National Guard (ING) Grant, cover up to four years of tuition for public institutions without specific semester limits, making them ideal for part-time learners aiming to spread their studies over multiple terms.

Another significant option for eligible students is the Illinois Promise Program at ILLINOIS. This program is designed to make college more accessible and affordable, covering tuition and mandatory fees for eligible in-state students with family assets below the federal poverty level. To qualify, students must be enrolled full-time, which typically means taking at least 12 credit hours per semester. However, if students do not meet full-time enrollment but have special



circumstances, they may still apply for financial aid through other programs.

Finally, scholarships and grants may well become available for this particular student population. BLS program staff has already connected with advancement staff at ILLINOIS and LAS and there is a strong interest from existing donors in supporting scholarships for non-traditional populations and degree-completion students. Based on this interest, once the program is officially established, we plan to continue conversations in setting up scholarships specifically for BLS students. Additionally, there are already scholarships available nationally and on our ILLINOIS campus that are open to part-time and online learners for which BLS students will be eligible to apply. BLS recruitment staff and advisors will be trained and expected to assist prospective BLS students with navigating scholarship options and financial aid. These options support a flexible path to completing a degree, provided students remain within credit and semester caps while meeting minimum enrollment requirements.

#### Asynchronous Versus Self-Paced: Online Bachelor's Degree-Completion Programs

The proposed BLS program is designed to be an asynchronous online-degree completion program. When reviewing online bachelor's degree-completion programs, it's important to understand the differences between asynchronous and self-paced formats, as each offers unique aspects to the structure and rigor.

Asynchronous online programs offer flexibility by allowing students to access course materials and complete assignments at their own pace. While there are no set synchronous class times, these programs do have deadlines for assignments, exams, and projects to ensure students stay on track and make steady progress. Comprehensive curricula and frequent assessments also ensure students gain a deep understanding of the subject matter and demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Regular interaction with instructors and peers through discussion boards, emails, and virtual office hours fosters a sense of community and provides opportunities for feedback and collaboration. This balance of flexibility and structure makes asynchronous online programs more rigorous than self-paced ones, demanding effective time management, commitment, and a deep understanding of the subject matter.

National data on the success of adult online learners in asynchronous versus self-paced degree programs also indicates some clear trends. Asynchronous degree programs provide a structured learning environment, allowing students to access course materials and assignments at their convenience while adhering to specific deadlines. This balance of flexibility and accountability tends to foster higher retention and completion rates among adult learners. The scheduled deadlines help maintain student engagement and motivation, while opportunities for interaction with instructors and peers through discussion boards create a sense of community that enhances the overall learning experience. In contrast, while self-paced degree programs offer ultimate flexibility, self-paced programs often correlate with lower completion rates. Many students may struggle with time management and motivation without the structure of defined deadlines, leading to challenges in staying engaged with their studies.

Overall, the data suggests that asynchronous programs are generally more effective for adult learners, as they provide the necessary structure and support to help students succeed. While self-paced programs offer valuable flexibility, they may not provide the same level of motivation and accountability, potentially resulting in lower success rates.

### Curriculum Design and Career Preparation

The BLS program curriculum was carefully developed around the competencies recognized by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) as critical for career readiness. Key competencies include communication, leadership, critical thinking, data analysis, and cultural competency. Courses were chosen with a cross-disciplinary approach, empowering students to develop skills that are versatile and applicable across various sectors, including government, education, and non-profit organizations. This structure offers students a robust foundation while allowing them to tailor their learning experience through three concentrations: Health and Society, Global Perspectives, and Management Studies.

Rationale for course selection in the core curriculum emphasized interdisciplinary exposure and applicability in diverse career settings. See below how each course in the core curriculum connects to a NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) competency, showing the skills these courses can help develop for career readiness:

#### 1. PS 201: US Racial and Ethnic Politics

- Competency: Equity & Inclusion
- Develops an understanding of racial and ethnic dynamics in the U.S., fostering skills to engage inclusively and respectfully with diverse populations, essential for promoting equity in the workplace.

#### 2. CMN 211: Business & Professional Communication

- Competency: Communication
- Focuses on professional communication techniques, from presentations to workplace interactions, enhancing skills for conveying ideas clearly and persuasively in business settings.

#### 3. ACE 240: Personal Financial Planning

- Competency: Critical Thinking
- Enhances critical thinking through financial decision-making and planning, equipping students with skills for sound financial judgment both personally and professionally.

#### 4. ECON 300: Everyday Economics for Non-Majors

- Competency: Critical Thinking
- Builds economic literacy, helping students analyze and interpret the economic forces affecting organizations, a vital part of strategic thinking.

#### 5. ADV 370: Sales and the Consumer

- Competency: Communication

- Competency: Communication

- Emphasizes persuasive communication and understanding consumer needs, critical for developing effective client relationships and enhancing sales skills.

#### 6. BADM 310: Management and Organizational Behavior

- Competency: Leadership & Teamwork
- Covers principles of effective leadership and team dynamics, preparing students to lead teams, manage people, and navigate organizational change.

#### 7. EPOL 310: Race and Cultural Diversity

- Competency: Equity & Inclusion
- Enhances understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity, essential for fostering inclusive work environments and addressing biases.

#### 8. CMN 326: Mass Media and the Audience

- Competency: Communication
- Explores media literacy and audience engagement, which are crucial for effectively communicating with varied audiences in media and public relations.

#### 9. BTW 380: Global Business Communication

- Competency: Communication
- Teaches cross-cultural communication skills essential in global business, preparing students to navigate cultural nuances in international settings.

#### 10. LEAD 440: Interpersonal Intelligence for Prof Success

- Competency: Communication
- Develops interpersonal skills and self-awareness, critical for professional relationships, team collaboration, and career development.

#### 11. PHIL 442: The AI Revolution

- Competency: Data and Analytical Decision Making
- Provides a foundation in AI technology, enhancing students' ability to understand, evaluate, and make data-driven decisions in technologically advanced workplaces.

#### 12. GER 455: Multilingual Cities in Europe

- Competency: Equity & Inclusion
- Examines multilingual and multicultural dynamics, preparing students to embrace diversity and foster inclusivity in global work environments.

#### 13. LEAD 470: Leading Professional Organizations and Communities

- Competency: Leadership & Teamwork
- Builds skills in leadership and organizational management, preparing students to effectively lead teams and support collaborative work environments.

#### 14. STAT 100: Statistics

- Competency: Data and Analytical Decision Making
- Teaches data interpretation and quantitative reasoning, foundational skills for making informed, evidence-based decisions in various fields.

#### 15. ADV 120: Data and Society

- Competency: Critical Thinking / Data and Analytical Decision Making
- Examines the ethical and societal impact of data, developing both analytical skills and critical thinking about data's role in society and in professional contexts.

#### Curriculum Development: Key Considerations

The development of the BLS program curriculum was grounded in a strategic alignment with degree Learning Outcomes and the NACE competencies. However, several other critical considerations influenced the design process to ensure the BLS program met the needs of its adult learners while maintaining academic rigor and institutional standards. These key considerations include:

##### 1. Length to Degree Time:

Reducing the overall time required to complete the degree was a high priority. As previously stated, many adult learners enroll on a part-time basis, averaging around 15 credit hours per academic year. Given this, it was essential to keep the length to degree time as minimal as possible. Adult learners often bring a variety of external commitments, such as work or family, which can prolong their educational journey. The BLS program was designed to account for the significant number of credit hours that transfer students may articulate in, providing flexibility while maintaining a clear pathway to graduation.

##### 2. Structured Academic Plan with Flexibility:

Many adult learners in online bachelor's programs prefer a structured curriculum because it provides a clear path to graduation, which is especially helpful for those balancing work and family responsibilities. A structured approach reduces decision fatigue, as students don't have to navigate numerous class options, and it ensures that essential skills are covered. This structure is often appealing to learners who want to stay focused on completing their degree efficiently. However, preferences can vary based on individual goals and circumstances. Those pursuing a degree to shift careers might prefer a structured program that ensures they gain foundational knowledge in a new field, while students looking to enhance their existing careers may favor more electives to focus on specific skills. Additionally, learners who need to complete their degree quickly or on a budget might appreciate a more structured program that avoids unnecessary electives and streamlines their path to graduation. Based on this information, the BLS program curriculum was created to offer a flexible mix of both structure and choice by requiring a set of core (required) courses and allowing the learner to choose a more focused concentration and fill out any remaining electives with their individualized choices.

### 3. Co-enrollment with Traditional Students and General Campus Population:

Another key consideration in the development of the BLS program is the co-enrollment of BLS students with traditional undergraduate students and non-degree seeking students in shared course sections. This approach offers several important benefits, both educationally and operationally.

Co-enrollment in online bachelor's programs, where adult learners study alongside traditional-aged students, offers numerous benefits that enhance the academic experience while remaining manageable for part-time adult students.

One of the primary advantages is the exposure to diverse perspectives. Adult learners bring valuable real-world experience and practical knowledge to the table, while traditional-aged students contribute fresh academic insights and technological skills. This mutual exchange enriches the learning environment, fostering a dynamic and engaging atmosphere that can motivate all students.

Networking opportunities are another significant benefit. Co-enrollment allows adult learners to expand their professional and academic networks, potentially leading to valuable connections that can benefit their careers. Additionally, adult learners can act as mentors to younger students, providing guidance and support, while also gaining fresh perspectives and energy from their younger peers.

The interaction with traditional-aged students can also increase motivation and engagement. The dynamic and energetic learning environment created by a mixed-age cohort can be particularly motivating for adult learners. Collaborative projects and discussions with a diverse group enhance engagement, making the learning process more interactive and enjoyable.

Despite the added academic rigor, co-enrollment is manageable for part-time adult students due to the flexibility of online programs. These programs allow students to balance their studies with work and family commitments, providing the necessary support systems to succeed. Younger students might assist with navigating new technologies, while adult learners can offer life and career advice, creating a supportive and collaborative learning community.

Moreover, working with a diverse group helps in developing essential soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability. Interaction with tech-savvy traditional-aged students can also help adult learners improve their technological proficiency, which is increasingly important in today's digital world.

Operationally, co-enrollment addresses key scheduling and resource efficiency concerns. By integrating BLS students into existing course sections, the program avoids the need to create separate, dedicated sections, thereby maximizing course capacity and reducing instructional costs. This model supports the financial sustainability of the program, ensuring that the institution can meet the needs of adult learners while efficiently utilizing resources and

maintaining a robust offering of courses. Additionally, shared course sections improve scheduling flexibility, allowing BLS students to access a wider range of courses without being limited by the availability of program-specific sections. This enhances their ability to complete the degree in a timely manner while benefiting from a collaborative, multidisciplinary learning environment.

#### 4. Availability of Online Asynchronous Courses to Meet Demand:

The supply of asynchronous online courses was another important consideration. The BLS program is primarily aimed at working professionals and adult learners who require the flexibility to study at on their own schedule, so we wanted to limit the amount of synchronous instruction required at a certain time and day. The curriculum planning accounted for the need to scale course offerings based on projected demand, ensuring that students could access the courses they needed without significant delays or bottlenecks. All departments offering courses as a part of the BLS curriculum (as general education, core, and/or concentration coursework) have signed 4-year agreements to provide their courses regularly and reserve seats for BLS students. In addition, BLS students can also choose from over 50 online, asynchronous courses to fulfill free electives.

#### 5. Inclusion of Upper Division Courses (300 or 400-Level):

To guarantee compliance with the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) requirement that at least 40 credit hours be taken at the advanced level, the curriculum was designed so that a student will easily accumulate 40 upper division hours simply by completing the core (required) courses and one concentration. Upper division courses not only meet regulatory standards but also challenge students to engage with complex concepts and develop skills that are critical for professional advancement. The inclusion of these higher-level courses supports the program's goal of producing graduates who are well-prepared for leadership roles and advanced professional responsibilities and ensure the academic rigor for this major is aligned with other baccalaureate degrees offered by ILLINOIS.

#### 6. Minimal Prerequisites for Courses:

To ensure accessibility and streamline the path to degree completion, the BLS program emphasizes minimizing course prerequisites wherever possible. This approach allows students to progress through the curriculum more efficiently, reducing potential delays caused by the need to complete prerequisite courses. It also supports the needs of transfer students, who may enter the program with varying levels of prior coursework, by allowing them to integrate more seamlessly into the degree plan. For those courses in the BLS curriculum that list course prerequisites, instructors have acknowledged in their support letters that, if necessary, they will provide supplemental resources for those students requiring review of materials.

#### 7. Avoiding Duplication of Existing Majors at ILLINOIS:

In the process of developing the BLS program, care was taken to ensure that the curriculum did not duplicate existing majors offered at ILLINOIS. The goal was to provide a unique interdisciplinary major that complements rather than competes with the institution's other

interdisciplinary major that complements rather than competes with the institution's other offerings. This was achieved by focusing the curriculum on cross-disciplinary learning and aligning it with competencies that span multiple fields, ensuring that the BLS program fills a distinct niche in the university's academic portfolio.

#### Curriculum Development Process: Governance and Collaboration

The development of the BLS curriculum followed a thorough and collaborative governance process within the College of LAS, engaging various levels of leadership and faculty expertise. This process was critical in ensuring that the program meets both academic standards and the needs of its target audience.

1. **Pre-Conversations Before Investment for Growth (IFG) Proposal:** Prior to submitting the formal IFG grant proposal, a series of pre-conversations were held with stakeholders across campus to gather input. These conversations allowed for early identification of potential challenges and opportunities for innovation.
2. **LAS Dean Venetria Patton, Associate Dean for Curricula & Academic Policy, and the Associate Dean for Technology & Online Learning:** These leaders played an essential role in shaping the online delivery model and ensuring the program aligns with academic principles, policies, and overall mission of the College of LAS. Their guidance helped ensure that the program utilizes technology effectively while maintaining high academic standards and access for this unique population.
3. **LAS Associate Dean for Finance and Resource Planning & budget staff:** The LAS financial team worked closely with program developers to make sure that the program is financially sustainable. This involved creating a budget model that supports program growth while keeping tuition affordable for adult learners.
4. **BLS Advisory Committee:** A dedicated advisory committee was formed to guide the development of the program. This committee comprised of 16 LAS members, including teaching and tenure-line faculty, administrators, and staff, provided recommendations on curriculum design, admissions policies, and student support strategies.
5. **Departmental Chairs and Professors:** Input from faculty across various disciplines was crucial in designing a cross-disciplinary curriculum. Faculty members contributed to course selection, ensuring that the core courses align with the NACE competencies and prepare students for interdisciplinary problem-solving. The BLS Director, Kristen Sackley, presented to over 35 academic departments and support units across campus. These meetings included department heads/chairs, director of undergraduate studies, executive officers, and deans.
6. **LAS Courses and Curricula Committee (LAS CCC):** This is a standing committee of the College of LAS overseen by the Associate Dean for Curricula and Academic Policy. The Committee is

made up of faculty members who serve staggered two-year terms and represent the eight LAS electoral groups. The Committee also includes four additional members with full voting rights: undergrad student, graduate student, academic professional, and specialized faculty. The Committee meets approximately every two weeks throughout the semester, reviewing all new and revised LAS courses and new LAS programs.

The eight LAS electoral groups represent the following areas:

- Group I: Classics, History, Philosophy, and Religion
- Group II: English, African American Studies, American Indian Studies, Asian American Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, and Latina/Latino Studies
- Group III: Comparative and World Literature, East Asian Languages and Cultures, French and Italian, Germanic Languages & Literatures, Linguistics, Slavic Languages & Literatures, and Spanish and Portuguese
- Group IV: Anthropology, Communication, Political Science, and Sociology
- Group V: Economics, and Psychology
- Group VI: School of Integrative Biology, School of Molecular and Cellular Biology
- Group VII: School of Earth, Society and Environment, and the School of Chemical Sciences
- Group VIII: Astronomy, Mathematics, and Statistics

7. LAS Dean's Cabinet and LAS Executive Committee: The LAS Dean's Cabinet receives proposals for new and significantly revised curricula and further evaluates proposals for any fiscal implications. The Dean's Cabinet is made up of 15 members, including the Associate Deans of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Area Centers, Humanities and Interdisciplinary Programs, and Life and Physical Sciences. The proposals are then reviewed by the LAS Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is made up of faculty members elected for two-year staggered terms and advises the Dean on proposals pertaining to programs, departments, and other units.

8. Cross-Campus Support: The BLS program has received letters of support from Deans of all other campus colleges and units, including: Carle Illinois College of Medicine (CIMED), College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences (ACES), College of Applied Health Sciences (AHS), College of Education (EDUC), College of Fine & Applied Arts (FAA), College of Law (LAW), College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (LAS), College of Media, College of Veterinary Medicine (VetMed), Gies College of Business (BUS), Graduate College, Grainger College of Engineering (GCOE), School of Social Work (SSW), School of Information Sciences (iSchool), School of Labor and Employment Relations (LER), and the University Library. These letters support the overall vision and structure of the BLS program.

#### Proactive Advising and Student Support Structure

The BLS program's academic advising and support system is proactive, designed to address the unique needs of adult learners in an online environment:

- Dedicated Advisors: BLS advisors guide students from enrollment to graduation, providing specialized assistance in course selection, concentration choices, and career planning. These



advisors serve as mentors who understand the pressures faced by adult learners, offering tailored guidance to ensure steady academic progress. BLS students will have a dedicated advisor who remains their advisor from start to finish in the program, which is critical for these students who need someone to know their individual story and unique needs as a part-time transfer learner. To accommodate the wide range of schedules that BLS students may have, program staff and academic advisors are available during evenings and weekends. This flexibility ensures that all students can access the support they need, regardless of their personal and professional commitments.

- **High-Impact Support Services:** LAS Career Services and a dedicated BLS team collaborate to provide access to career development, job search resources, and networking opportunities. This support, embedded within the curriculum, ensures students are job-market ready by graduation.
- **Student Engagement Initiatives:** Recognizing that adult learners benefit from a structured and responsive support system, the BLS program includes frequent check-ins, early intervention for at-risk students, and community-building activities that foster a sense of belonging. Advisors actively monitor student engagement, anticipating challenges before they impact performance. Additionally, the BLS program hosts in-person meet-ups and provides opportunities for students to network through both in-person and online program-specific events and webinars. These initiatives are designed to enhance the student experience by offering platforms for meaningful connections, professional development, and academic support, ensuring that every student feels integrated and supported throughout their educational journey.
- **Orientation & Registration Meetings:** BLS staff will host orientation sessions for new students in the program as it is crucial and sets the foundation for their academic journey while helping them navigate the complexities of returning to higher education. These sessions provide essential information about the program structure, resources available, and expectations, ensuring that students feel prepared and confident as they embark on their studies. Additionally, one-on-one registration meetings with academic advisors play a pivotal role in this acclimation process. These personalized interactions allow students to address their unique concerns, explore their educational goals, and develop tailored academic plans. By fostering a supportive relationship with their advisor, adult learners can gain valuable insights, clarify doubts, and receive guidance that will empower them to successfully balance their academic responsibilities with personal and professional commitments, ultimately enhancing their chances of success in their degree program.
- **LAS 103 Onboarding Course:** The LAS 103: BLS Online Student Success course developed specifically for BLS students is designed to help first-term BLS students transition smoothly into university life. This 8-week, zero-credit course provides a comprehensive introduction to the university's resources, digital tools, and support services. Students will engage in various activities and discussions to build connections with peers, develop academic and career plans, and learn strategies for balancing their studies with personal and professional responsibilities.

Throughout the course, students will explore several key topics in detail:

1. Navigating Illinois: An overview of the university and essential starting points for new students.
2. Digital Tools for Success: In-depth guidance on using Canvas, MyIllini, UI Self-Service, and other online tools crucial for academic success.
3. Creating Community and Finding Resources: Identifying and utilizing campus services that support learning and well-being.
4. Academic and Professional Success: Enhancing online etiquette, refreshing resumes, and understanding academic integrity and professionalism.
5. Designing Your College Transfer Experience: Crafting a personalized roadmap for a successful transfer journey.
6. Work and Life Balance: Strategies tailored for adult learners to balance work, studies, and personal life effectively.
7. Looking Ahead: Planning next steps and celebrating accomplishments as the course concludes.

For an online adult learner new to the university, this course offers invaluable guidance and support, ensuring they feel connected and prepared to succeed in their academic journey. The flexible, asynchronous format allows learners to manage their time effectively while gaining essential skills and knowledge to thrive at Illinois.

## Conclusion

In summary, the Bachelor of Liberal Studies represents a visionary, strategic initiative that aligns with institutional goals, fulfills a critical societal need, and ensures adult learners are well-prepared for diverse professional fields. This program exemplifies the university's dedication to educational accessibility, workforce preparedness, and support for traditionally marginalized populations. The BLS program contributes to closing the equity gap in higher education, particularly for Black and Latinx students who make up a large portion of the "stopped-out" population. By providing a viable pathway to a four-year degree, the BLS enhances career mobility and economic stability for underserved demographics, directly supporting the university's mission of fostering inclusivity and access. Financially sustainable through shared course sections and a tuition model aligned with student needs, the BLS also strengthens the university's reach and its commitment to lifelong learning.

## BLS Curriculum Overview

All departments offering courses as a part of the BLS curriculum (as general education, core, and/or concentration coursework) have signed 4-year agreements to provide their courses regularly and reserve seats for BLS students. BLS curriculum will be continually evaluated to ensure coursework relevancy for adult learners and that departments can continue to offer online coursework that is accessible to BLS students. Course substitutions are permitted following IAS guidelines and consultation with a BLS academic advisor.

## General Education Requirements

Participating departments across the University have committed to offering their courses online, ensuring accessibility for BLS students (see Letter of Support documents attached to this proposal). A designated number of seats will be reserved in all online courses offered through the BLS program specifically for BLS students, guaranteeing enrollment and program progress.

BLS students will be permitted to take any course that qualifies for General Education credit, but the program has ensured the availability of seats in the following classes: ANTH 103 (Cultural Studies - Non-West, Social & Beh Sci - Soc Sci), ANTH 246 (Nat Sci & Tech - Life Sciences), ATMS 120 (Nat Sci & Tech - Phys Sciences, Quantitative Reasoning II), CLCV 231 (Humanities - Hist & Phil, Cultural Studies – Western), RHET 105 (Composition I), GEOL 117 (Nat Sci & Tech - Phys Sciences), GLBL 240 (Cultural Studies - Western), GER 101 (LOTE Level I), GER 102 (LOTE Level II), HIST 100 (Humanities - Hist & Phil, Cultural Studies - Non-West), HIST 104 (Humanities - Hist & Phil, Cultural Studies - US Minority), HK 207 (Quantitative Reasoning I), SPAN 101 (LOTE Level I), SPAN 102 (LOTE Level II), SPAN 122 (LOTE Level II).

Please Note: Some BLS program and Concentration courses will also fulfill General Education Requirements (e.g. BTW 380 and EPOL 310 for Composition II).

In addition to General Education Requirements, the BLS program (Liberal Studies major) is comprised of-

### 1. The BLS core coursework, consisting of:

ACE 240, ADV 120, ADV 370, BADM 310, BTW 380, CMN 211, CMN 326, ECON 300, EPOL 310, GER 455, LAS 103, LEAD 440, LEAD 470, PHIL 442, PS 201, and STAT 100

2. Selection of at least 1 of the following Concentrations: Global Perspectives, Health and Society, and Management Studies. Students may select more than 1 concentration if they require additional credits to reach the 120 credit hours requirement for graduation.

Students in the program will complete at least 40 upper division hours through the required core coursework and selection of one Concentration.

### 1. BLS core coursework that counts toward upper division hours:

ECON 300 (3 hours), ADV 370 (3 hours), BADM 310 (3 hours), EPOL 310 (4 hours), CMN 326 (3 hours), BTW 380 (3 hours), LEAD 440 (2 hours), PHIL 442 (3 hours), GER 455 (3 hours), LEAD 470 (2 hours)

= 29 upper division hours

### 2. Concentration coursework that counts toward upper division hours:

Global Perspectives Concentration (15 upper division hours), Health and Society Concentration (12 upper division hours), Management Studies Concentration (11 to 12 upper division hours)

= 11-15 upper division hours

Note: LAS 103, ADV 120, ECON 300, and GER 455 have been approved, effective Fall 2025, and will show as course not found until the Academic Catalog rolls to the next Academic Year, in early 2025. See CIM Course approval documents in the Program of Study section.

## Instructional Resources

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Will there be any reduction in other course offerings, programs or concentrations by your department as a result of this new program/proposed change?

No

Does this new program/proposed change result in the replacement of another program?

No

Does the program include other courses/subjects outside of the sponsoring department impacted by the creation/revision of this program? If Yes is selected, indicate the appropriate courses and attach the letter of support/acknowledgement.

Yes

Courses outside of the sponsoring department/interdisciplinary departments:

ACE 240 - Personal Financial Planning  
ADV 120 - Consumer Data and Society  
ADV 370 - Sales and the Consumer  
BADM 310 - Mgmt and Organizational Beh  
BTW 380 - Global Business Communication  
CMN 211 - Business and Professional Comm  
CMN 326 - Mass Media and the Audience  
ECON 300 - Everyday Economics  
EPOL 310 - Race and Cultural Diversity  
LEAD 440 - Interpersonal Intelligence  
LEAD 470 - Leading Prof Orgs & Comm  
PHIL 442 - The AI Revolution  
PS 201 - US Racial & Ethnic Politics  
STAT 100 - Statistics  
GER 455 - Multilingual Europe

Please attach any  
letters of support/  
acknowledgement  
for any  
Instructional  
Resources.

[Letter of Support\\_ACE.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_STAT.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_SPAN.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_PS.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_PHIL.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_LEAD.pdf](#)

Consider faculty,  
students, and/or  
other impacted  
units as  
appropriate.

[Letter of Support\\_HK.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_GLBL.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_ESEC.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_EPOL.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_ECON.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_CMN.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_CliMAS.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_ANTH.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_ADV.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_BADM.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of ACES.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of SOCW.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of GRAD.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of CIMED.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of AHS.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of MEDIA.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_ENGL.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of EDU.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_CLCV.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_HIST.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_GER.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of Library.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of LAW.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of GIES.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of LER.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of VETMED.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of FAA.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of GCOE.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of iSchool.pdf](#)  
[PrereqConsideration\\_CMN.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_CITL.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_ATLAS.pdf](#)  
[Executive Summary Liberal Studies, BLS.pdf](#)  
[Letter of Support\\_Dean of LAS.pdf](#)

## Program Features

---

Academic Level      Undergraduate

Does this major  
have transcripted  
concentrations?      Yes

Concentrations

Concentrations(s)
Liberal Studies: Global Perspectives, BLS
Liberal Studies: Health and Society, BLS
Liberal Studies: Management Studies, BLS

Will you admit to the concentration directly? No

Is a concentration required for graduation? Yes

What is the longest/maximum time to completion of this program? 8 years

What are the minimum Total Credit Hours required for this program? 120

CIP Code 240101 - Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies.

Is this program part of an ISBE approved licensure program? No

Will specialized accreditation be sought for this program?

No

Describe the institution’s plan for seeking specialized accreditation for this program. Indicate if there is no specialized accreditation for this program or if it is not applicable.

Not Applicable.

If this program prepares graduates for entry into a career or profession that is regulated by the State of Illinois, describe how it is aligned with or meets licensure, certification, and/or entitlement requirements.

Not Applicable.

Does this program prepare graduates for entry into a career or profession that is regulated by the State of Illinois?

No

Program of Study

Provide detailed information (course rubrics, numbers, and credit hours) of how a student could obtain 40 credit hours of upper-division coursework.

Students in the program will complete at least 40 upper division hours through the required core coursework and selection of one Concentration.

1. BLS core coursework that counts toward upper division hours:

ECON 300 (3 hours), ADV 370 (3 hours), BADM 310 (3 hours), EPOL 310 (4 hours), CMN 326 (3 hours), BTW 380 (3 hours), LEAD 440 (2 hours), PHIL 442 (3 hours), GER 455 (3 hours), LEAD 470 (2 hours)  
= 29 upper division hours

2. Concentration coursework that counts toward upper division hours:

Global Perspectives Concentration (15 upper division hours), Health and Society Concentration (12 upper division hours), Management Studies Concentration (11 to 12 upper division hours)  
= 11-15 upper division hours

Attach Program of Study related information here.

[LAS 103 Course Fully Approved.pdf](#)  
[ADV 120 Course Fully Approved.pdf](#)  
[ECON 300 Course Fully Approved.pdf](#)  
[GER 455 Course Fully Approved.pdf](#)  
[Sample Sequence\\_Liberal Studies BLS.docx](#)

## Catalog Page Text - Overview Tab

### Catalog Page Overview Text

The Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) degree-completion program allows students to explore various subject areas available across campus, while still having the opportunity to build strong foundational knowledge in liberal arts. Students will work with an advisor from the College of LAS to select concentration(s) and coursework based on their interests with the purpose of aligning their educational and career goals with their academic plans.

Students will earn a degree with a major indicated as Liberal Studies and have 1 or more concentrations noted on their transcript.

Students in the Bachelor of Liberal Studies program must maintain a 2.0 or higher GPA to remain in good standing.

Specific course recommendations will vary depending on the student's goals and interests. Course substitutions will be permitted upon consultation with the BLS academic advisor and LAS guidelines.

**Graduation Requirements**

Minimum hours required for graduation: 120 hours.

Minimum Overall GPA: 2.0

**University Requirements**

Minimum of 40 hours of upper-division coursework, generally at the 300- or 400-level. These hours can be drawn from all elements of the degree. Students should consult their academic advisor for additional guidance in fulfilling this requirement.

The university and residency requirements can be found in the [Student Code](#) (§ 3-801) and in the [Academic Catalog](#).

**General Education Requirements**

Follows the [campus General Education \(Gen Ed\) requirements](#). Some Gen Ed requirements may be met by courses required and/or electives in the program.

Composition I	4-6
Advanced Composition	3
fulfilled by <a href="#">BTW 380</a> , <a href="#">EPOL 310</a>	
Humanities & the Arts (6 hours)	6
Natural Sciences & Technology (6 hours)	6
Social & Behavioral Sciences (6 hours)	6
fulfilled by <a href="#">PS 201</a> ; and one other course approved as Social & Behavior Sciences	
Cultural Studies: Non-Western Cultures (1 course)	3
Cultural Studies: US Minority Cultures (1 course)	3
fulfilled by <a href="#">PS 201</a> , <a href="#">EPOL 310</a>	
Cultural Studies: Western/Comparative Cultures (1 course)	3
Quantitative Reasoning (2 courses, at least one course must be Quantitative Reasoning I)	6-10
fulfilled by <a href="#">STAT 100</a> ; and one other course approved as Quantitative Reasoning I or II	
Language Requirement (Completion of the third semester or equivalent of a language other than English is required)	0-15

**Major Requirements**

<b>Required Core Courses</b>		<b>44</b>
<a href="#">ACE 240</a>	Personal Financial Planning	3
<a href="#">ADV 120</a>	Consumer Data and Society	3
<a href="#">ADV 370</a>	Sales and the Consumer	3
<a href="#">BADM 310</a>	Mgmt and Organizational Beh	3



<a href="#"><u>BTW 380</u></a>	Global Business Communication	3
<a href="#"><u>CMN 211</u></a>	Business and Professional Communication	3
<a href="#"><u>CMN 326</u></a>	Mass Media and the Audience	3
<a href="#"><u>ECON 300</u></a>	Everyday Economics for Non-Majors	3
<a href="#"><u>EPOL 310</u></a>	Race and Cultural Diversity	4
<a href="#"><u>GER 455</u></a>	Multilingual Europe	3
<a href="#"><u>LAS 103</u></a>	BLS Online Student Success	0
<a href="#"><u>LEAD 440</u></a>	Interpersonal Intelligence for Professional Success	2
<a href="#"><u>LEAD 470</u></a>	Leading Professional Organizations and Communities	2
<a href="#"><u>PHIL 442</u></a>	The AI Revolution	3
<a href="#"><u>PS 201</u></a>	US Racial & Ethnic Politics	3
<a href="#"><u>STAT 100</u></a>	Statistics	3
<b>Concentrations: Choose at least one below</b>		<b>14-15</b>
Global Perspectives		
Health and Society		
Management Studies		
<b>Free Electives</b>		
Free electives to bring total to 120 hours		
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>120</b>

Corresponding Degree	NONE None Associated
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## Program Regulation and Assessment

### Plan to Assess and Improve Student Learning

*Illinois Administrative Code: 1050.30(b)(1)(D) Provision is made for guidance and counseling of students, evaluations of student performance, continuous monitoring of progress of students toward their degree objectives and appropriate academic record keeping.*

## Student Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate proficiency in written and oral communication, expressing ideas clearly in various formats and for diverse audiences.

Students will learn to inspire, cooperate, and motivate others to achieve shared goals. Students will understand the importance of obtaining feedback from others and appreciating other perspectives.

Students will demonstrate the ability to learn independently, make inquiries, think critically, discover solutions, and integrate knowledge across both similar and varied areas of liberal arts. Students will analyze complex problems, identify relevant information, formulate creative and effective solutions, and demonstrate critical thinking skills in addressing real-world challenges.

Students will understand the importance of using data and gain the ability to effectively acquire, analyze, and interpret data. Students will be able to effectively convey complex data insights to diverse audiences across various industries.

Students will broaden their global and disciplinary knowledge, enhancing their understanding of the world around them. Students will demonstrate awareness, attitudes, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures.

Students will be able to integrate knowledge and approaches from multiple disciplines, recognizing the interconnectedness of ideas and applying a holistic understanding to real-world challenges. Students will be equipped with the skills to adapt to evolving challenges and new contexts, demonstrating a commitment to continuous learning and personal development.

Describe how, when, and where these learning outcomes will be assessed.

Describe here:

Evaluation of student learning in the BLS program will accord with the guidelines and procedures established by the campus Council on Learning Outcomes Assessment. Additionally, the BLS Advisory Committee will review the BLS curriculum annually to ensure it aligns with the program's learning outcomes. Individual instructors will assess student performance and course effectiveness through various means, including course-embedded projects, presentations, and exams. Adjustments and changes to lectures, assignments, course projects, and course emphasis will be based on student performance on specific outcomes. Additionally, students will contribute to the evaluation process by offering feedback on instructor performance and course effectiveness via ICES evaluations.

To maintain academic standards, each student is required to uphold a minimum GPA of 2.0 per semester to avoid placement on academic warning. Furthermore, students must not remain on academic warning for more than two consecutive semesters to prevent consideration for dismissal from the program. Any student who attains a GPA below 1.0 during a semester faces dismissal. Additionally, a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 is necessary for graduation. Advisors are crucial in monitoring student performance and progress and providing personalized mentoring and support.

The BLS administration will use key performance indicators to evaluate the program annually.

The key performance indicators include:

- number of applications received
- enrollment figures disaggregated by gender, geography, URM status, concentration, and academic year
- retention rate percentage (within each course and online degree)
- learner experience rating (Likert-scale will be used to assess learner experience with the application, admissions, and enrollment processes, in addition to communication, course quality, live and asynchronous courses/sessions, access to faculty/instructors, and technical support)
- ICES course evaluations
- LAS Online course evaluations
- time to degree completion
- student performance metrics (course grades, GPA, etc)
- feedback from graduating students, employers, and alums via surveys

Identify faculty expectations for students' achievement of each of the stated student learning outcomes. What score, rating, or level of expertise will signify that students have met each outcome? Provide rating rubrics as necessary.

To maintain academic standards, each student is required to uphold a minimum GPA of 2.0 per semester to avoid placement on academic warning. Furthermore, students must not remain on academic warning for more than two consecutive semesters to prevent consideration for dismissal from the program. Any student who attains a GPA below 1.0 during a semester faces dismissal. Additionally, a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 is necessary for graduation. Advisors are crucial in monitoring student performance and progress and providing personalized mentoring and support.

To ensure students achieve learning outcomes, faculty will monitor student progress through various assessments aligned with each course's specific goals. Faculty will utilize rubrics to clearly define student expectations. Faculty can also collaborate with instructional designers to guarantee their assessments accurately measure learning outcomes.

Explain the process that will be implemented to ensure that assessment results are used to improve student learning.

BLS advisors will monitor individual students' academic performance. They will notify, engage, and support students who land on academic warning. The BLS Team will conduct regular program reviews, incorporating assessment data alongside faculty and student feedback. The team will identify any specific areas to enhance student learning. This could involve gaps in particular skills, knowledge areas, or learning outcomes.

Program  
Description and  
Requirements  
Attach Documents

## Delivery Method

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This program is  
available:

Online Only - The entire program is delivered online, students are not required to come to campus.

Describe the use of this delivery method:

The BLS degree is entirely online. Courses will be delivered through the Canvas learning management system. Students can take all their classes online, allowing them to remain in their current location and job to complete the degree. There are online courses for all major requirements and all general education requirements. All participating departments and units have committed to offer their courses online and to reserve a designated number of seats specifically for BLS students.

## Admission Requirements

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Desired Effective  
Admissions Term

Fall 2025

Provide a brief narrative description of the admission requirements for this program. Where relevant, include information about licensure requirements, student background checks, GRE and TOEFL scores, and admission requirements for transfer students.

To be considered for the BLS Program, you must be a transfer or reentry student. The BLS program is not designed for first time freshmen. Meeting minimum requirements does not guarantee admission.

#### Minimum Credit Hours:

Students must have 12 or more college-level, transferrable semester hours

- AP credits or proficiency credits do not count toward this requirement.

By having completed at least one semester's worth of credit hours at a college level, students have demonstrated the ability to handle post-secondary coursework.

#### Minimum GPA:

Students must have a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 grading scale based on ALL college-level work completed.

#### Specific Applicant Requirements:

On-campus transfer students (Intercollegiate Transfer or LAS Curriculum Change)

- Must have been inactive for one academic year
- Have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0
- Must meet the LAS Intercollegiate Transfer requirements

UIUC reentry (returning) students who meet on-campus transfer requirements must

- Have not been enrolled in courses for the one academic year
- Complete Re-Entry Application form
- Meet on-campus transfer requirements

#### Off-campus transfer students

- Must meet LAS transfer requirements for BLS program
  - o 12 credit hours of college-level, transferrable coursework
  - o 2.0 cumulative GPA

#### Non-degree UIUC students

- Treated as an off-campus transfer student, unless they have been enrolled in a UIUC degree-seeking program in the past, they are technically reentry.

#### International students

- Must satisfy the current full status admissions requirement of English proficiency.

#### Admissions Eligibility Petition:

Students who do not meet admission requirements may submit an eligibility appeal through

the LAS Recruitment and Admissions unit. LAS R&A will consult with BLS Director on all petitions.

## Enrollment

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Number of Students in Program (estimate)

Year One Estimate                      50

5th Year Estimate (or when fully  
implemented)

200

Estimated Annual Number of Degrees Awarded

Year One Estimate                      5

5th Year Estimate (or when fully  
implemented)

70

What is the  
matriculation term  
for this program?

Spring/Summer/Other

Please give an explanation of why fall matriculation is not applicable:

Spring, Summer, and Fall terms will be available.

## Budget

---

Will the program or revision require staffing (faculty, advisors, etc.) beyond what is currently available?

Yes

Please explain/  
describe:

In addition to the Director who is already in place, the BLS program budget allows for hiring of 2 academic advisors, 1 coordinator and 1 assistant director specifically for BLS students in the first 5 years of the program to accommodate expected enrollment and increased need for student services and programming.

Additional Budget  
Information

Attach File(s)

## Financial Resources

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How does the unit intend to financially support this proposal?

The College of LAS received an FY23 funded Investment for Growth. The IFG will enable us to initially fund the BLS program; funds have been used for the salaries of administrative staff and student services. IFG funds are also providing stipends for instructors and course development specialists to develop new or modify existing online courses in the BLS Program.

Revenue generated through student tuition will cover additional expenses, further course development/production, and operational costs.

Will the unit need to seek campus or other external resources?

Yes

If yes, please provide a summary of the sources and an indication of the approved support.

The College of LAS received an FY23 funded Investment for Growth. The IFG will enable us to initially fund the BLS program; funds have been used for the salaries of administrative staff and student services. IFG funds are also providing stipends for instructors and course development specialists to develop new or modify existing online courses in the BLS Program.

Revenue generated through student tuition will cover additional expenses, further course development/production, and operational costs.

Attach letters of  
support

What tuition rate do you expect to charge for this program? e.g, Undergraduate Base Tuition, or Engineering Differential, or Social Work Online (no dollar amounts necessary)

Undergraduate Base Online



What is the specific title of the proposed degree program as it would be listed in the IBHE Program Inventory? The name should be what typically is used for similar programs nationally. Provide a short description of the program, including highlights of the program objectives, and the careers, occupations, or further educational opportunities for which the program will prepare graduates.

The title of the proposed degree program, as listed in the IBHE Program Inventory, would be Bachelor of Liberal Studies. This program is designed to cater to students with some prior college experience who have not completed their bachelor's degree.

The Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) program offers a flexible curriculum with online courses from various departments within the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences and other campus partners. The curriculum is intentionally designed to accommodate the diverse backgrounds students bring to the program, allowing them to tailor their studies to their interests and career goals.

Highlights of the program objectives include

1. Flexibility. The BLS program aims to provide students with the flexibility to balance their studies with their busy schedules, catering to working adults and those with personal commitments.
2. High-quality education. The BLS program leverages the University's existing strengths in liberal arts education and online learning to deliver a high-quality educational experience.
3. Completion. The primary objective of the BLS program is to enable students to complete their bachelor's degree, expanding their career opportunities and opening doors to further educational and professional advancement.
4. Interdisciplinary learning. The BLS curriculum is composed of courses from various departments and colleges. Students will engage in interdisciplinary learning, gaining a well-rounded education that fosters critical thinking, communication skills, and cultural awareness.

Upon completing the Bachelor of Liberal Studies program, graduates will be prepared for careers and occupations in education, government, non-profit organizations, business, and more. Additionally, graduates may pursue further educational opportunities such as advanced degrees, specialized certifications, or professional programs.

## **Institutional Context**

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### **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

**Describe the historical and university context of the program's development. Include a short summary of any existing program(s) upon which this program will be built.**

Explain the nature and degree of overlap with existing programs and, if such overlap exists, document consultation with the impacted program's home department(s).

The proposed online Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) degree completion program directly aligns with the University of Illinois' mission to enhance the lives of citizens through leadership in learning.

#### Historical Context:

There is a long-standing national trend towards increasing access to higher education, with a growing focus on serving non-traditional students and those from underserved communities. The online BLS program directly addresses this national movement by providing a flexible and accessible pathway to a four-year degree for students who may not have been able to complete a traditional on-campus program.

#### University Context:

The University's Next 150 Strategic Plan emphasizes expanding access to education, while the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' 2021-2025 Strategic Plan focuses on creating innovative online learning experiences. The online BLS program fulfills these strategic goals by leveraging the University's strengths in liberal arts education and online learning infrastructure.

#### Existing Programs:

The BLS program builds upon the existing strengths of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS). It does not directly replicate any existing major offered by LAS but instead draws on a wide range of existing courses across various departments and units. Additionally, six colleges outside of LAS have agreed to partner and provide courses for the BLS curriculum. This interdisciplinary approach is a hallmark of the BLS program.

#### Overlap with Existing Programs:

There is minimal overlap with existing programs because the BLS degree is not a major in a specific discipline. However, some courses offered in the BLS program may also be a part of existing majors. The BLS team held discussions with the departments in the BLS core curriculum and concentrations. These consultations addressed potential overlap and ensured sufficient capacity to accommodate BLS students without impacting existing programs. This collaborative approach will foster a supportive environment for the BLS program and ensure its successful integration within the existing academic structure.

## University of Illinois

Briefly describe how this program will support the University's mission, focus and/or current priorities. Demonstrate the program's consistency with and centrality to that mission.

The proposed online Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) program directly aligns with the University of Illinois' mission to transform lives and serve society through education in several ways.

**Increased Access to Education:** The BLS program expands access to a four-year degree for historically underserved populations and non-traditional students who may not have been able to pursue a traditional on-campus program. Increased access fosters social mobility and empowers individuals to contribute more effectively to society.

**Creating Knowledge and Putting Knowledge to Work:** The BLS curriculum exposes students to diverse liberal arts subjects. The BLS program equips graduates with valuable communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, preparing them for various careers and making them more effective contributors to the workforce and their communities.

The BLS program demonstrates its centrality to the University's mission by:

1. **Transforming Lives.** By providing an accessible pathway to a bachelor's degree, the BLS program empowers individuals to pursue their goals and improve their life prospects. This aligns with the University's focus on creating positive societal impact.
2. **Serving Society.** The BLS program addresses national trends toward increased access and equity in higher education.
3. **Excellence in Education.** The BLS program leverages the University's existing strengths in liberal arts education and online learning to deliver a high-quality educational experience. This upholds the University's commitment to excellence in all aspects of its mission.

Discuss projected future employment and/or additional educational opportunities for graduates of this program. Compare estimated demand with the estimated supply of graduates from this program and existing similar programs in the state. Where appropriate, provide documentation by citing data from such sources as employer surveys, current labor market analyses, and future workforce projections. (Whenever possible, use state and national labor data, such as that from the Illinois Department of Employment Security at <http://lmi.ides.state.il.us/> and/or the U.S. Bureau for Labor Statistics at <http://www.bls.gov/>).

The online BLS degree is a degree completion program, designed primarily for students who have started, but not finished, a four-year undergraduate degree. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than half of students who start a four-year degree program stop out within six years. As of July 2021, the Some College, No Credential (SCNC) population in the U.S. has reached 40.4 million people, with and Black and Latinx students continuing to make up a disproportionate share of the total number (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center). When looking at the state data for Illinois, the SCNC population is approximately 1.9 million individuals, of which 86,000 are considered "potential completers" (having already completed 60 credit hours).

This growing SCNC population is coupled with projections from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW), which estimates that 72% of U.S. jobs in 2031 will require postsecondary education. With 12.5 million job openings annually requiring at least some college education, the BLS program positions graduates to fill this growing demand.

The BLS program, designed for working adults seeking to complete their degrees, aligns with the shifting demographics of higher education. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) data reveals that re-enrolling students often pursue Liberal Arts, Business, and Healthcare degrees, aligning with the BLS program's concentrations.

The BLS program tackles educational equity issues disproportionately impacting Black and Latinx students. By providing a flexible online format, the program caters to working adults and geographically diverse populations who might struggle with traditional on-campus programs.

Research by APLU and the Annual Review of Public Health shows that higher education leads to greater career opportunities, civic engagement, and improved health outcomes. The BLS program directly addresses these disparities, creating a pathway for marginalized communities to achieve success.

The BLS curriculum equips graduates with critical thinking and communication skills – highly valued by employers according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). These skills provide a strong foundation for careers in education, government, non-profits, business, and more. Management and administrative occupations are very common for workers with a liberal arts degree, and the BLS program can prepare graduates for in-demand management positions. Overall employment in management occupations is projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations from 2022 to 2032. About 1.1 million openings are

projected each year (U.S. Bureau of Statistics). Additionally, graduates can pursue advanced degrees, specialized certifications, or professional programs, offering a pathway for lifelong learning and career advancement.

Cited Resources:

<https://nscresearchcenter.org/some-college-no-credential/>

<https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/projections2031/>

<https://www.aplu.org/our-work/4-policy-and-advocacy/publicvalues/employment-earnings/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5880718/>

<https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/competencies-employers-weight-importance-versus-new-grad-proficiency>

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/field-of-degree/liberal-arts/liberal-arts-field-of-degree.htm#emp>

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/home.htm>

What resources will be provided to assist students with job placement?

Due to the nature of the BLS program and intended target audience, we expect most students to be currently employed working professionals. For BLS students wanting to change career paths or move up in their profession, the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences will offer an online version of LAS 302: Internships and Professional Experiences, which will be open to BLS students. LAS Career Services and advisors in the LAS Student Academic Affairs Office will also provide students with resources as needed.

If letters of support  
are available attach  
them here:

## Comparable Programs in Illinois

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Identify similar programs and sponsoring institutions in the state, at both public and private colleges and universities. Compare the proposed program with these programs, and discuss its potential impact upon them. Provide complete responses, do not reference website links.

The proposed BLS program seeks to establish a unique educational opportunity within the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) landscape.

While the IBHE Degree Program Inventory lists 45 bachelor's degrees classified under CIP Code 24.0101 (Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies), only three programs exist within the IBHE Prairie Region. Notably, both options at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign require on-campus attendance.

Even within the broader CIP code category, fully online programs are rare. Only 10 institutions across the state offer fully online Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies degrees, and only 6 are public universities (Chicago State, Eastern Illinois, Governors State, Southern Illinois Carbondale, University of Illinois Springfield, and Western Illinois).

This limited availability of online programs within the Prairie Region highlights the groundbreaking nature of the BLS program. The BLS program will be the state's only online bachelor's completion program focused on liberal studies from an R1 University. It will offer a flexible and accessible pathway to a valued degree for working adults and students seeking an alternative to traditional on-campus programs.

#### More Information about UIS's Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies

The Liberal Studies (LIS) program at University of Illinois Springfield was created in 1995. The online degree version launched in 1999. The LIS program consists of two tracks: Liberal Studies or Interdisciplinary Studies. The Liberal Studies (not formally introduced until AY2023-2024), is a separate track for degree completion, catering to adult learners possessing college credit but lacking a degree.

For Fall 2024 enrollment, E-tuition is \$367.50/credit hour. Mandatory Fees and Assessments for part-time students is \$113 plus \$24.50/hour. Online students are also charged an Online Academic Support Fee of \$45/hour.

The LIS program at UIS has experienced a decline in enrollment in recent years. As of Fall 2023, there were 39 students enrolled, with an average age of 34. Of these, 21 were part-time and 18 were full-time students. Despite an average enrollment of 53 students per year since Fall 2016, the program has seen a downward trend in recent semesters, culminating in the conferral of 13 degrees in FY2024.

Both the BLS at UIUC and LIS at UIS programs offer flexibility and interdisciplinary study, but they differ in key areas. First, the LIS program at UIS offers various modalities (in-person, hybrid, and online), which allows them to cater to multiple student populations. The Liberal Studies track, formally introduced in AY 2023-2024, is the only pathway for students who have already

completed some college credit. In comparison, the BLS program was strategically designed as a degree completion program, focused on the adult learner population with some college credit seeking to complete their degree. Additionally, the BLS program's completely online delivery mode eliminates geographical barriers and caters to the needs of non-traditional students, such as working adults and caregivers, who manage work and family obligations.

While both programs offer interdisciplinary study, the BLS program is unique in its cross-campus design. The BLS curriculum includes courses from various LAS departments and units, in addition to 6 other campus colleges. Additionally, the LIS curriculum requires only 2 courses and is designed for independent, self-directed students wishing to create their own plan of study. In contrast, the BLS is a more structured program with required core classes and specific concentrations, based on adult learner interests and growing industry demand.

Comparable

Programs in Illinois

Attach Documents

### **A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth**

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IBHE is charged to develop a strategic plan to address the present and future aims and needs and requirements of higher education in Illinois (110 ILCS 205/6) (from Ch. 144, par. 186) Sec. 6). Illinois Administrative Code:

1050.30(a)(6): A) The unit of instruction, research or public service is educationally and economically justified based on the educational priorities and needs of the citizens of Illinois Respond to the following questions about how the proposed program will support the three goals of A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth Strategic Plan.

### **Equity**

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Describe institutional-level plans to close equity gaps in access, progression, completion, and attainment and the implications for the proposed program. More specifically, provide institutional-level plans for attracting, recruiting, retaining, and completing a diverse group of students including working adults, students of color, transfer and low-income students and implications for the proposed program. Explain how progress will be monitored.

#### Institution-level plans for Access, progression, completion, and attainment

At the System level, the University of Illinois prioritizes closing equity gaps among the citizens across Illinois, within our urban and rural communities, and beyond. While the fundamental needs that will drive greater economic vitality vary greatly across zip codes in the state, it is clear that closing equity gaps among our citizens remains crucial to achieving the mission of the University of Illinois System.

Supportive of IBHE's A Thriving Illinois plan and aligning its Equity Strategy #2, the UI System's Access 2030 Strategic Plan is a comprehensive initiative designed to increase the number of graduates from underrepresented groups by 50 percent by the end of the decade. This will include students from disadvantaged backgrounds – ethnic and racial, rural, and urban. This initiative will strengthen the University of Illinois' bedrock commitment to the public good, ensuring that as we work to improve life in our state, we are not leaving communities behind. It will build on ongoing efforts to create more opportunities for Illinoisans of all backgrounds. The initiative is being toolled to close equity gaps throughout the pipeline, working from K-12 through college, including our community colleges. Access 2030 embodies Equity Goal 2 of A Thriving Illinois, providing a framework for and supporting the three institutions' equity plans.

In addition to Access 2030, the University of Illinois System is engaged in various programs and supports aimed at student recruitment and retention. One such program is Salute to Academic Achievement (SAA). SAA has run for 40 years, and targets underrepresented minority groups and students from low-sending counties. The students are invited either for their academic performance (identified by GPA and standardized test score) or by nomination by a high school counselor (must meet minimum GAP requirement and belong to target population) to attend a college-fair type event. Participants are recognized for academic achievements, and have the opportunity to meet with college, admissions, financial aid, and housing representatives from all three UI System universities. Participants also receive fee waivers for future admissions applications for each university along with an individualized Certificate of Academic Achievement. We are currently expanding the number of students who receive invitations.

The President's Award Program (PAP) and PAP Honors provide financial support for students admitted to one of the UI Systems three institutions from historically underrepresented groups. The PAP award is \$5,000 per year available for a maximum of four years while the PAP Honors Program awards \$10,000 per year for four years. Over \$301.6 million has been distributed between 2006 and 2022.

A third example of System level support is the UI System Transfer Guarantee Program, which aligns with Growth Strategy #8. Cognizant that many underrepresented minority students begin



their higher education journeys at community colleges, this program guarantees admission to students who apply to any of the three campuses if they graduated from an Illinois high school, attended an Illinois community college, and attained 36 graded credit hours and a minimum 3.0 GPA. We are currently developing program enhancements to expand the guarantee to all students who graduated from Illinois high schools and who have maintained the academic criteria noted above for Fall 2025.

Finally, to curb out-of-state migration, all of the four-year publics unite for a college fair once per year. This event will be slightly enhanced to now attract high school students earlier in their academic journey in an effort to reach them sooner in the college decision-making process.

In alignment with the UI System's Access 2030 Strategic Plan, at the institution level is the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's 2024-2025 Equity Plan. Submitted to IBHE in May, 2024 outlines pursuit of two aspirational goals:

- 1) Close the graduation rate gap between Underrepresented Minorities (URM) and Non-URM students by 2030.
- 2) Increase by 50% the number of undergraduate degrees earned by URM students over the next 12 years.

These goals reflect the university's commitment to close equity gaps by investing in expanding current and new initiatives and deliberately understanding the campus climate. To address the equity gaps between URM and Non-URM undergraduate students, the campus will work on four focus areas:

- 1) PreK-12 Engagement
- 2) Undergraduate Recruitment and Enrollment
- 3) Undergraduate Retention and Completion
- 4) Campus Climate and Culture.

The PreK-12 engagement is the newest area of work at the institution level and represents an intentional framing that includes the centralization of programs, the development of partnerships, and the enhancement of opportunities across the state to increase college awareness and readiness. In addition to continued investment in current financial aid programs such as Illinois Promise and Illinois Commitment, as part of the Equity Plan, the university will also be investing in new initiatives such as the Digital Innovation for Equity and Excellence in College Admissions (DIEECA) work.

As retention and completion requires intentional, coordinated work, Student Success @ Illinois has become a permanent, funded area to lead in the review and interrogation of policies and practices that are often considered barriers for success for specific groups of students. Additionally, the university is investing in expanded support for first generation students such as the NASPA First Scholars Network and growth of bridge/early move-in programs.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion work is led by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity,

Diversity, equity, and inclusion work is led by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (OVCDEI). The OVCDEI's goals, ongoing assessments, and initiatives impact students as well as faculty and staff, and student-focused programming sets the tone for the institution's efforts as they relate to all of A Thriving Illinois' equity strategies. In fall 2023, the institution administered a campus-wide climate assessment instrument to understand the degree to which students feel safe, accepted, and valued. The goal is to provide a quantitative sense of how individuals feel about their campus experiences. This assessment will include students' perceptions of the quality of their interactions with peers, faculty members, and administrators, including their sense of the campus as a place where they belong and are treated with respect. The university is partnering with the Association of American Universities (AAU), external organizations, and peer institutions to ensure the survey instrument is state of the art, has questions that shed light on multiple axes of diversity, and generates data that can be shared and benchmarked against peer institutions to tease out challenges that are unique to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus as well as those that are common to peer universities. As of May 2024, the campus received preliminary reports from the survey. These reports and data are under review in the summer of 2024 with the expectation to deliver and socialize the data to campus stakeholders in fall, 2024. The campus has charged four working groups: assessment, faculty & staff, students, and communication to guide university administration with this initiative. The working groups are tasked with developing frameworks for effectively socializing the climate survey, results, and implementation plans to the campus; disseminating reports to the university community and academic and administrative units; and assessing opportunities for campus- and unit-level responses to the reports.

In keeping with the institutional framework led by the OVCDEI, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is engaged with a number of efforts to strategically support and bolster equity on campus. For example, in July, 2020, the university pledged \$2 million annually for the Chancellor's Call to Action to Address Racism and Social Injustice to focus the intellectual and scholarly talent of the university to examine two of the greatest challenges facing society and seek new solutions.

Over the first four years of the program:

- the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion has received and reviewed 171 proposals and funded 59 projects.
- more than \$4.3 million in research funding has been awarded.
- approximately 433 individuals have worked on funded research projects.
- as of April 2024, 30% of the PIs have used their Call to Action project to seek external funding, applying for more than \$18 million to support further research.

The 59 projects were awarded to principal investigators from 14 campus units, 10 of which were academic. To date, the program has provided research experience for approximately 48 undergraduate and graduate students and engaged in the local community as co-project leaders or team members for their expertise.

In October 2022, OVCDEI hosted the inaugural Research Symposium, which included a keynote conversation with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, Director of the Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University. The second Research Symposium featuring projects funded during 2023-24 was held on April 5, 2024.

Critical efforts on the campus surround activities related to closing the graduation gap and increasing student success. The university is an active participant in the American Talent Initiative, with Chancellor Robert Jones serving on ATI's steering committee. ATI is focused on expanding student access to high graduation-rate institutions, with the goal of enrolling and graduating 50,000 additional high-achieving, low-and moderate-income students from these institutions by the year 2025. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has targeted the following goals: 1. increase the six-year graduation rate for Pell students to 81% for the 2017 entering cohort; 2. increase targeted opportunities for incoming students to participate in summer scholar/bridge programming in an attempt to increase the number of Pell students enrolling, improve retention rates, and reduce graduate rate gaps for this population.

Additionally, the university is a leader in the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities Powered by Publics (APLU PxP) initiative. The goals of APLU PxP are to produce several hundred thousand more degrees by 2025; to eliminate the achievement gap for low-income, minority, and first-generation students; and to expand access to higher education for students from all backgrounds. Since 2018, one hundred thirty (130) universities and state systems participate in 16 transformation "clusters." The university served as lead in the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) Cluster, which is studying retention and persistence starting with a focus on foundational course "DFW" rates to determine barriers faced by students pursuing degree advancement and align best practices to address those challenges. The group's work is outlined in this learning memo.

The university has begun to use these data to examine foundational course curriculum and determine additional supports needed for students in these courses. This has culminated in a project called the Inclusive Course Redesign Initiative (ICRI). ICRI began in Spring, 2023 focused on inviting faculty to consider course redesign with equity and inclusion at the core. Inclusive course redesign is a process of intentionally designing course materials and activities to be more welcoming and accessible to all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. By working in partnership with the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL), instructors can create more equitable learning environments that support the success of all learners. Inclusive course redesign can involve changes to course syllabi, assessments, classroom policies, and more. Each semester depending on availability of CITL partners, faculty are invited to participate by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education in consultation with the faculty member's home academic unit. In the Spring, 2023, Fall, 2023, and Spring, 2024 semesters, faculty who teach in larger, foundational courses which were identified as having gaps in final grade performance were prioritized for participation. Gaps refer to significantly higher percentages of students receiving a final grade of D or F or who withdrew from the course comparing URM students to White students and first-generation students to non-first-

generation students. Additional courses will be selected for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Aligned with the goals of the ATI and APLU work is the campus' Student Success @ Illinois (SS@I) work. Known as the Student Success Initiative when it kicked off in 2019, goals are: 1. increase access (reduce cost of attendance, increase aid, consider time to degree); 2. eliminate equity gaps (increase retention and graduation rates for underrepresented and minoritized students); 3. improve the Illinois experience (abandon "sink or swim" mentality, identify and broaden campus programs, support services, and opportunities for engagement). Recognizing that Student Success is ongoing work, what was known as the "Student Success Initiative" became SS@I in 2023. A variety projects emerged from SS@I that have enabled the university to provide greater focus on recruitment and retention efforts. Some examples of key current efforts include:

- Student Success Symposia: The 3rd Annual Student Success Symposium in February 2024 drew more than 250 participants. As part of the Symposia, campus recognizes individuals and teams based on their contributions to Student Success @ Illinois with Student Success Champion Awards.
- Early Alert and Outreach: An advisory group has been meeting since 2022 to research and recommend appropriate early alert markers to connect students with relevant resources early in the semester. Starting with the Spring, 2023 semester, a select group of instructors engaged in a pilot effort to utilize Canvas Learning Management System data to detect early warning signs of academic issues. Information from the pilot paired with interviews with campus academic advisors will be used to help build an equitable, sustainable early alert system and to inform a communication campaign around the importance of class attendance and engagement.
- Policies:
  - o Grounded in research showing institutional labeling of students in racially and culturally charged ways leads to disproportionality negative experiences for historically underrepresented minority students, a SS@I Policy and Issues Group worked toward changing "probation language." In 2024, the university approved revisions to this language. Effective starting in the Fall, 2024 semester, all academic standing codes at the university that used the word "probation" will be replaced with either "low GPA warning" or "college academic warning" depending on the code. Throughout 2024, this Policy and Issues Group has been examining college, departmental, and program websites to ensure consistency with the university's revised language. Academic unit representatives are also tasked with evaluating practices in determining students' academic status, messaging to these students, and programs available to support them.
  - o Led by the Director for General Education, a SS@I Policy and Issues Group is currently studying access and outcomes for historically marginalized students in general education courses and requirement categories. Using student outcomes data to look at grade disparities by group and impact on time-to-degree, the Director and the Policy and Issues Group will make recommendations to the campus General Education Board and, where appropriate, to the Academic Senate, on appropriate revisions with the goal of more equitable outcomes.
  - o The Transfer Student Experience Task Force met throughout the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

academic years, investigating the impact of certain university policies such as the residency requirement on transfer students. The Task Force authored a proposal to reduce this requirement from 60 to 45 credit hours with the intention of reducing time to degree completion for transfer students and better alignment with peer institutions. The proposal was approved by the Academic Senate in December, 2023 and will go into effect starting with the Fall, 2024 semester.

- Academic Advising: Cognizant that academic advisors are key to students' retention and experience, SS@I is focusing on supporting the university's advising community to advance efforts to create a sustainable and equitable advising experience for students and a professional advising community for academic advisors and those in advising adjacent roles. SS@I hosts the Advisor Series, a monthly professional development opportunity for advisors. In addition, a group with representation from academic advising and student support units across campus came together regularly to develop a landscape analysis survey followed by focus groups to collect feedback from the advising community. Among other findings, advisors indicated a need for coordinated resources. As a first step in this direction, the SS@I website is being redesigned to include a central location for many student, advising, and staff resources.

Finally, the university's recruitment plan and programming aligns with A Thriving Illinois and with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions' (OUA) statement on their Diversity Site. The university offers a number of outreach and recruitment programs geared toward historically underrepresented minority students geared toward underrepresented populations. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign moved to test-optional, with ACT/SAT scores optional for all first-year applicants. Test scores are not required to be considered for merit-based or honors programs. OUA has dedicated teams to enhance the recruitment and enrollment of underrepresented groups; in 2024, these teams included a group on African American Recruitment and Yield, one on Native American Recruitment and Yield, and a third focused on Latinx Recruitment and Yield. The objective is to assemble stakeholders from campus sectors already engaged in impactful work with underrepresented populations, fostering ongoing dialogues and collaborations to devise innovative recruitment and enrollment strategies. In alignment with A Thriving Illinois Growth Strategy 8 to strengthen the statewide, coordinated transfer system to ensure students have seamless paths to build on previous academic learning and earn postsecondary credentials, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has multiple transfer pathway programs. The Parkland Pathway program allows students to dual enroll at Parkland College and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign while living in university residence halls. There are also intensive advising partnerships with City Colleges of Chicago, Danville Area Community College, Illinois Central College, and Rock Valley College. In 2022, the campus implemented Public Act 102-0187, the Public University Uniform Admission Pilot, which guarantees transfer students admission to the university if they meet minimum requirements.

college, department, and program level plans. Access, progression, completion, and attainment

With 21 percent of undergraduate students and 12 percent of faculty from underrepresented backgrounds, the College of LAS strives to drive change by listening to and uplifting marginalized voices. One goal included in the LAS Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 is to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion. This includes leading campus efforts to recruit and retain historically underrepresented minority faculty, staff, and students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. LAS maintains a number of Inclusive Excellence Programs, including the Illinois Academic Leadership and Management Institute (ALMI), a collaborative mentoring network, the LAS EO Excellence in Academic Leadership, and an Inclusive Pedagogy Certificate. LAS is also committed to supporting the essential activities of the American Indian Studies Program and the Departments of African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Latina/o Studies, and Gender and Women's Studies by constructing a modern instructional and research facility. LAS leads the campus-wide implementation of the U.S. Minority Cultures General Education requirement by developing courses and pedagogical resources for graduate students and faculty involved in this instruction. LAS will also implement a five-year cycle of climate surveys for all college units, leading to action plans that promote a diverse, equitable, and inclusive climate free from harassment based on ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, religion, or nationality.

The BLS program is designed with equity at its core, aiming to minimize barriers and empower a diverse student body. We will achieve this through several key initiatives:

**Accessibility and Affordability:** The fully online format eliminates geographical limitations and caters to the busy schedules of working adults. Additionally, we are committed to keeping the program affordable with a competitive LAS Online tuition rate. Our advisors will work closely with students to connect them with University scholarships, grants, and financial aid options.

**Targeted Outreach and Support:** We will actively reach out to students of color through partnerships with community colleges and organizations serving minority communities. Dedicated advisors will provide personalized support throughout the enrollment process, ensuring a smooth transition for all students.

**Inclusive Curriculum and Marketing:** Our program curriculum is designed to be culturally aware and reflective of diverse perspectives. Marketing materials will emphasize the program's commitment to inclusivity.

**Comprehensive Support Services:** From registration assistance to academic support resources, the BLS program will provide students with the tools they need to succeed academically.

Describe program and institution-based high-impact practices and wrap-around student support services ensuring equitable access and success for students enrolled in the proposed program.

Institution-level high-impact and wraparound support services

Access 2030 demonstrates the University of Illinois' commitment to supporting "the ongoing learning renewal of students and systemic implementation of evidence-informed student support practices." This equity-focused plan includes emphasis on the three universities' summer bridge programs, proactive advising, and high-impact practices to support retention and to ensure equitable access and success.

In addition to Access 2030, the System supports students through the President's Research in Diversity Travel Assistance award. This competitive program, primarily for graduate students, has been established for the purpose of promoting diversity and the understanding of diversity within the University. Recipients are provided a certificate and funding up to \$600 to travel to a professional conference related to diversity or identity (such as those conferences involving race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and national origin) to present papers, posters, or creative work at conferences related to diversity or identity.

At the institution level, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign prides itself on the array of high-impact practices and services offered to students. These student support practices support the ongoing learning renewal of students and systemic implementation of evidence-informed student practices, which align with Equity Strategy 1 of A Thriving Illinois. The Counseling Center, Office of the Dean of Students, McKinley Health Center, and the Connie Frank CARE Center (formerly known as the Student Assistance Center) are accessible to all students via in-person or remote options to facilitate student wellness and retention. All students are encouraged to participate in workshops hosted by the university's Writer's Workshop and are eligible to receive assistance on writing projects through their writing assistants. For students with disabilities, Disability Resources & Educational Services (DRES) has helped thousands of students earn college degrees and Urbana-Champaign has been recognized as a national leader in the area of post-secondary education for persons with disabilities. Indeed, as the oldest post-secondary disability support program in the world, DRES has been associated with many programmatic innovations including:

- The seminal research which led to the development of the first architectural accessibility standards that would become the American National Standards Institute Standards;
- The first wheelchair-accessible fixed route bus system;
- The first accessible university residence halls;
- The first university service fraternity and advocacy group comprised of students with disabilities, Delta Sigma Omicron; and
- The first university to receive the Barrier-Free America Award from the Paralyzed Veterans of America (2012).

Additionally, poised at the crossroads of academic and student affairs, the Michael L. Jeffries, Sr. Center for Access and Academic Support (formerly known as the Office of Minority Student Affairs) is one of the oldest and most comprehensive student support programs in the nation. The Jeffries Center has embodied the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's land-grant mission by championing access for all students and providing a comprehensive array of college preparatory and support services to bolster students' success since its inception. Programs such

preparatory, and support services to bolster students' success since its inception. Programs such as A&M (Advising and Mentoring), First Generation Student Initiatives, and Tutoring and Academic Services the Center also align with A Thriving Illinois Equity Strategy 8 with the use of staff as advisors/coaches as well as peer and near-peer tutoring. The Jeffries Center currently houses nine departments.

In 2022, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign was recognized as one of 53 institutions in the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals' (NASPA) First-Gen Forward 2022-2023 cohort. First-Gen Forward was the first program to acknowledge higher education institutions for their commitment to the success of first-generation students. As a NASPA First-Gen Forward institution, the university applied and was accepted into NASPA's First Scholars Network. This membership signifies the university's competency and commitment to the success of first-generation students. Through the network, the university receives tools, resources, and expert guidance, including data, peer networks, evidence-based approaches, and data-driven continuous improvement. The university established a First-Generation Steering Committee in January, 2023 to work with the Center for First-Generation Student Success to establish goals, identify barriers, and create improvement projects to enhance the experience of first-generation students on campus. In the 2023-2024 academic year, this Steering Committee launched their Insights Tool, which is a comprehensive diagnostic self-assessment in which members of the community share information about institutional efforts to support first-generation students. They also joined the Postsecondary Data Partnership, which provides insights into students' academic progress and outcomes across participating institutions. In the fall of 2023, the Jeffries Center hired the inaugural Director of First-Generation Student Initiatives to lead programming and service delivery to the undergraduate first-generation student community.

The Office of Student Affairs, particularly Student Success, Inclusion and Belonging (SSIB), supports numerous programs aimed at supporting diverse groups of students including working adults, students of color, and transfer and low-income students (just a sampling of which are provided in this document. SSIB houses the university's cultural and resource centers and a variety of high-impact programs; to name just three examples: 100 STRONG Program, I-Connect Diversity & Inclusion Workshops, and Housing Division Social Justice and Leadership Education. Veteran support is provided through the Chez Veterans Center out of our College of Applied Health Sciences, which includes individualized academic and career coaching to support progress and address barriers, peer and professional mentoring to foster community and networking, and health and wellness services to promote psychosocial adjustments and well-being.

The Career Center offers coaching and support students and connects them to opportunities, as they make career decisions and learns lifelong career management skills. They serve as leaders of the university's career services community. The Career Center in partnership with the Jeffries Center sponsors the FOCUS program, an intensive year-long program created to eliminate the gap in post-graduation outcomes and starting salaries between underrepresented first-generation students and their peers. Its aim is to positively impact their



underrepresented, first-generation students and their peers. Its aim is to positively impact their career trajectory, earnings potential, and economic security for years to come. Through a series of workshops, this program provides transformative learning experiences for students in and out of the classroom. Those selected to participate receive a \$1,000 scholarship over two semesters.

Finally, the university continues to develop and grow the Illinois Scholars Program (ISP). Designed to serve residents of the state of Illinois from historically underserved populations and low-sending counties, ISP guides undergraduate students' transition to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign by providing a wide range of educational, personal, social, and cultural opportunities. ISP aims to combine opportunity and access, experiential learning, and support to position students for academic success and personal growth throughout their time at Illinois. ISP begins with a four-week intensive summer bridge experience for incoming first-year students, and ISP continues to provide support and community for Illinois Scholars during their undergraduate years. Since the program's inception in 2018, 266 students have completed their summer bridge experience, with a 97.1% retention rate from their first to second term, compared to a 89% campus retention rate for underrepresented minority students during the same period. As of August 2024, 46 ISP students have graduated with their bachelor's degrees. During 2023, ISP hired a full-time Illinois Scholars Program Coordinator position and expanded the summer bridge participants from 25 students from two colleges to 69 students from nine colleges, with that number expected to grow to 150 students by 2026. Curricular modifications are underway to provide stronger academic support. Current academic support includes math, writing, and undergraduate research.

College, department, and program-level high-impact and wraparound support services

The BLS program prioritizes equitable access and student success through a combination of high-impact practices and comprehensive wrap-around support services.

High-Impact Practices:

Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Students explore a wide range of liberal arts disciplines, fostering critical thinking and communication skills. This broad foundation prepares them for a variety of careers and further education.

Learner-Centered Design: Courses utilize active learning strategies like discussions,

Explain institutional strategies, implement innovative projects, and retain a faculty, staff, and administrators of color and the implications for the proposed program. Explain how progress will be monitored.

Institution-level efforts to recruit and retain faculty, staff, and administrators of color

LAS 103: A dedicated first-semester course to introduce students to the online learning

Aligned with Equity Strategy, it implements effective study skills. This can be especially helpful for faculty, staff, and administrators of color, the UI System and the University of Illinois



matching funds (i.e., 1/3 of the initial salary) if the partner is hired into a tenure track position through the DCP. Several years ago, the Provost modified the DCP to provide only non-recurring funding (1-3 years) for non-tenure track partner hires which has helped to reduce the overall cost of the program. Thanks to DCP, the university was ranked second in the nation in the most recent Partner Hire Scorecard.

The campus also continues to fund postdoctoral fellowships targeted to underrepresented scholars in ethnic studies programs (e.g., Latina/Latino Studies, American Indian Studies, etc.) and through the DRIVE program. These programs are intended to help provide postdocs with an opportunity to build a foundation of scholarship that will prepare them for tenure track positions. While the ethnic studies postdocs are selected through a specific advertisement, the DRIVE program identifies candidates through a search process for open faculty positions.

Finally, through a partnership with the University System Office and departments, the Provost's Office also supports the Underrepresented Faculty Recruitment Program in making available non-recurring funds for research to enhance offers of employment. Awards up to \$20,000 per year for each of the first three years of employment are available for those hired in the 2022-2023 academic year. The Provost's Office funds the additional search expenses incurred by bringing an additional candidate to campus if that person is from an underrepresented group.

Additional retention efforts include programming and development activities for executive officers and faculty members across ranks. Programming and resources for unit executive officers (EOs) equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for leadership including ways to enhance their ability to support and mentor faculty within their units, particularly faculty members of color. The Office of the Provost also coordinates several leadership development programs to increase the pool of potential academic leaders on campus with intentional focus on supporting faculty members from underrepresented groups to explore campus leadership and administrative roles. The university continues to be a strong partner in the Big Ten Academic Alliance's Academic Leadership Development Programs, with numerous faculty and staff from the university participating as fellows.

The Office of the Provost also invests in faculty development. From recruitment to onboarding, through promotion, and retirement, faculty members have access to programming and resources designed to meet them and address their careers needs. The office also supports several institutional memberships that provide external resources to our faculty, such as the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity to ensure faculty members' continued access to NCFDD's resources.

To monitor progress of campus efforts to recruit and retain faculty members of color, the Provost's office collects, manages, and reports annual data through the Division of Management Information and Office for Access and Equity. Additionally, a yearly report on hiring and retention of faculty on campus is produced that includes women and faculty of color

through the Faculty at Illinois report.

## Sustainability

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College, department, and program-level efforts to recruit and retain faculty, staff, and administrators of color

One objective of the LAS Strategic Goals for 2021-2025 is to recruit and retain historically underrepresented minority faculty and staff. LAS plans to accomplish this by:

1. Strengthening support structures for historically underrepresented student success through ensuring adequate resources for the Access & Achievement Program, graduate fellowships, and undergraduate scholarships.
2. Working with the relevant campus offices to improve hiring practices and policies to increase and diversify departmental staff involved in recruitment, administration, advising, and other elements of departmental culture.
3. Reassessing the role of public engagement as a form of scholarly work, recognizing the importance of such work for the research, teaching, and service of historically underrepresented faculty members.
4. Working with the campus to expand the Target of Opportunity Program (TOP) to include salary funding until the faculty member resigns or retires, expanding the Dual Career for Academic Couples Program (DCAC) to include financial support for faculty with partners eligible for academic professional or some civil service positions, and expanding the minority start-up funds program to include transgender faculty and faculty with disabilities.
5. Developing data dashboards and collecting metrics to assess and hold the College and its departments accountable for their climate and the diversity of their students, faculty, and staff.

Additionally, the College of LAS plans to:

1. Continue to implement a comprehensive program for departmental training on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in areas such as hiring, evaluation, promotion, and retention.
2. Implement a five-year cycle of climate surveys for all college units, leading to action plans that promote a diverse, equitable, and inclusive climate free from harassment based on ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, religion, or nationality.
3. Provide in-person workshops on diversity, equity, inclusion, and sexual and gender-based harassment grounded in best practices for transforming work cultures.

The BLS program shares the College's commitment to achieving its strategic goal of inclusive hiring and retention. We will actively participate and contribute to this college-wide effort.

Describe strategies and initiatives the institution plans to implement that makes the proposed program and college more generally affordable for students and their families, including those who have been historically underserved.

#### Institution-level affordability plans

The University of Illinois and the University of Illinois System have been committed to implementing strategies to make college “more affordable, particularly those who have been historically underserved.” The following initiatives have been implemented and promising outcomes have already been realized. The President’s Award Program (PAP) and PAP Honors provide financial support for students admitted to one of the UI Systems three institutions from historically underrepresented groups. The PAP awards range from \$5,000 per year available for to \$10,000 per year for four years.

The University participates in the State of Illinois AIM HIGH Grant program, which provides merit-based financial assistance to students who qualify based on state eligibility requirements.

Aligned with A Thriving Illinois’ Equity Strategy 5 and Growth Strategy 4 to encourage high school graduates to enroll in our higher education system and keep talent in Illinois, the University of Illinois adopted the Common App.

Recognizing the barrier that affordability creates to higher education, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has taken action to increase the portfolio of financial support for students. The university annually provides over \$519 million in financial aid funding to undergraduate students, with 72% of students receiving some type of aid. Nearly \$203 million of that funding comes from institutional sources, with the vast majority provided to Illinois residents as need-based grants and scholarships. The university has two signature financial aid programs. Began in 2005, the Illinois Promise program covers tuition, campus fees, room/board, and books/supplies through a combination of federal, state, and institutional grants and a \$2,500 Federal Work-Study award to Illinois residents whose family income is at or below the federal poverty level. In 2019, the Illinois Commitment program began and provides a combination of federal, state, and institutional grants to cover tuition and campus fees for Illinois residents whose family income is \$67,100 or less. Approximately 25% of Illinois residents attending the university receive funding through either the Illinois Promise or Illinois Commitment programs. Of the 2022-2023 cohort of Illinois Commitment recipients, 36% identify as Hispanic, 29% as White, 18% as Black/African American, 14% as Asian, and 3% identify as two or more races. The Chancellor’s Access Grant doubled from \$2,500 to \$5,000 for the 2022-2023 academic year. This grant further assists Illinois residents from historically underrepresented groups and allows students to stack this award with other institutional awards.

#### College, department, and program affordability plans

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) is committed to making the BLS program an

affordable, accessible, and flexible option for adult learners, particularly those from historically underserved communities and first-generation college students. Here's the multi-pronged approach aimed at achieving this goal:

**Tailored for Working Professionals:**

**Flexible Online Format:** The BLS program is designed entirely online, offering asynchronous courses and flexible scheduling to accommodate the busy lives of working adults. This allows students to pursue their degree while balancing work and personal commitments.

**Focus on Knowledge and Skills:** The curriculum emphasizes the development of in-demand knowledge and skills relevant to targeted areas of interest. This practical focus helps students enhance their career prospects and potentially qualify for promotions or career advancement opportunities.

**Financial Aid and Affordability Strategies:**

**Tuition Rate:** The BLS tuition will use the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Online rate of \$424 per credit hour (as of Academic Year 2024-2025). This competitive rate aligns with the tuition the online ESES program uses and is the same rate paid by non-degree seeking students. The BLS Program will also accept employee tuition waivers.

**Scholarship Exploration:** The BLS team will actively explore opportunities to create scholarships for adult learners enrolled in the BLS program. This could involve partnering with alum associations, foundations, or corporations to establish need-based or merit-based scholarships.

**Support Services for Underrepresented and First-Generation Students:**

The LAS Student Academic Affairs Office offers dedicated staff who support students from underrepresented and first-generation populations enrolled in the BLS program. This support can help foster a sense of belonging and community, alleviate anxieties about navigating college life, and provide technical assistance with the admissions and enrollment processes.

**Collaboration and Transparency:**

**Cost Transparency:** Develop a clear and comprehensive online resource that outlines the costs associated with the BLS program, including tuition, fees, and estimated living expenses. This transparency empowers students to make informed financial decisions.

**Data-Driven Decisions:** Regularly analyze student demographics and financial aid utilization data to identify any potential equity gaps in program affordability and support services for adult learners, underrepresented populations, and first-generation students. This data will inform adjustments to financial aid strategies, affordability initiatives, and support services.

Provide tuition cost analysis for comparable

Due to the collaborative nature of this program, we will use the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Online rate of \$424 per credit hour (as of Academic Year 2024-2025). This competitive rate aligns with the tuition the online ESES program uses. Students will be eligible to apply for

programs and  
institutions in  
Illinois.

financial aid through the University.

Institution: Eastern Illinois University, BA in Interdisciplinary Studies  
Estimated Tuition and Fees: \$427.10 per credit hour  
Source: <https://www.eiu.edu/online/#section3>

Institution: University of Illinois, Springfield, BA in Liberal Studies  
Estimated Tuition and Fees: \$475 per credit hour  
Source: <https://www.uis.edu/registrar/tuition-fees>

Institution: Western Illinois University, BA in General Studies  
Estimated Tuition and Fees: \$493.06 per credit hour  
Source: [https://www.wiu.edu/business\\_services/billing/costs/](https://www.wiu.edu/business_services/billing/costs/)

Institution: Northern Illinois University, Bachelor of General Studies  
Estimated Tuition and Fees: \$377.04 per credit hour  
Source: <https://www.niu.edu/online/undergraduate-programs/bgs-bachelor-general-studies.shtml>

Institution: Northeastern Illinois University, BA in Interdisciplinary Studies  
Estimated Tuition and Fees: \$430.95 per credit hour (in-state rate)  
Source: <https://www.neiu.edu/financial-aid/tuition-and-fees-costs-of-attendance/tuition-information#tab3>

Institution: Governors State University, BA in Interdisciplinary Studies  
Estimated Tuition and Fees: \$772.00 per credit hour  
Source: <https://www.govst.edu/tuition>

Institution: Northwestern University, BS in Social Sciences  
Estimated Tuition and Fees: \$2,200 per unit  
Source: <https://sps.northwestern.edu/part-time-undergraduate/tuition-costs.php>

Provide a supply and demand analysis for the proposed program that, at minimum, does the following: a) Provides evidence of student interest in the proposed program including any strategies to incentivize students to stay in Illinois. b) Identifies and provides evidence of a high-quality credential with viability for future careers.

A) Provide evidence of student interest in the proposed program including any strategies to incentivize students to stay in Illinois

As of July 2021, the Some College, No Credential (SCNC) population in the U.S. has reached 40.4 million people according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. When looking at the state data for Illinois, the SCNC population is approximately 1.9 million individuals, of which 86,000 are considered "potential completers." While we know the BLS program will reach individuals outside of Illinois with an online and flexible format, national data from EduVentures shows that degree-completion seekers often enroll in institutions they are familiar with and located nearby (in-state).

The BLS program is designed for working professionals, enabling them to complete their degree online while maintaining their careers and personal obligations. Many of these students will already have careers established within the state. Therefore, our incentive strategies focus on both attracting new talent and supporting the career advancement of existing Illinois residents.

Financial Incentives:

The University of Illinois undergraduate tuition rate has remained unchanged in 7 of the past 10 years. This freeze decision maintains the system's commitment to affordability. Furthermore, the BLS tuition will use the competitive College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Online rate of \$424 per credit hour; this makes the program a cost-effective option for working professionals in Illinois, allowing them to further their education without excessive financial strain.

The BLS Team will explore opportunities to create scholarships. This could involve partnering with alum associations, foundations, or corporations to establish need-based or merit-based scholarships.

Career Opportunities:

The BLS program will integrate career services and support services within the curriculum. BLS students will have access to workshops on resume writing, interview skills, and job search strategies specifically focused on advancing careers within Illinois. The BLS program will promote career fairs, internship opportunities for career changers, or job shadowing programs within Illinois companies. Finally, it is important to build a strong alumni network for the BLS program, connecting graduates with current students and fostering a sense of community within the state. This network can be particularly helpful for working professionals looking to expand their professional network within Illinois.

By implementing these strategies, the state will benefit from a more highly educated workforce and a loyal talent pool. The BLS program can provide a pathway for existing professionals to upgrade their skills and knowledge, making them more competitive in the Illinois job market. By providing career support, the program can incentivize graduates, including those already



rooted in Illinois, to stay and contribute to the state's future economic development.

B) Identify and provide evidence of a high-quality credential with viability for future careers. The BLS program, with its focus on Liberal Arts and Sciences within a flexible online format, equips graduates with diverse skills that are highly marketable across various industries. In 2022, EduVentures identified the top fields adult learners were interested in; the BLS's three concentrations for launch (Global Perspectives, Health and Society, and Management Studies) were strategically designed to align with these areas and meet growing industry demand. Furthermore, partnerships with the Gies College of Business, the School of Labor and Employment Relations, and the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences ensure that the BLS curriculum will be well-rounded and provide students with applicable career skills.

Career opportunities include jobs in business and management, public service, communication and media, and learning and development. Additionally, BLS graduates can leverage their interdisciplinary knowledge to pursue careers in fields like healthcare, law, or technology after completing relevant certifications or additional training. Entrepreneurship opportunities are also available as the program cultivates critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Explain how the program engaged with business and industry in its development and how it will spur the state's economy by leveraging partnerships with local, regional, and state industry, business leaders and employers.

College-specific and department-level regional partnerships with business and industry:

The College of LAS offers numerous opportunities for companies to connect with talented students and pursue research collaborations. The Corporate Affiliate Program provides access to student talent and engagement opportunities across LAS units. Current participants include Addison Group, Anthem, BP, Dupont, Eli Lilly and Company, Mutual of Omaha, and Nisa Investment Advisors.

Actuarial Science Club hosts Meet the Firms, an annual career forum that provides a recruiting opportunity for approximately 30 companies representing the insurance and consulting industries.

The IRisk Lab currently serves as an industry-academic collaboration hub, showcasing state-of-the-art research in Risk Analysis and Advanced Analytics.

The Global Leaders Program is designed to give students real-world practice in innovative problem-solving, cross-cultural communication, and consulting work. Each year, GLP has a range of corporate partners, including Ernst & Young, Amazon Web Services, and DeepWalk.

Program-specific regional partnerships with business and industry:

The BLS curriculum was built around the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) competencies to equip graduates with the practical skills employers actively seek. The

BLS program aims to prepare students for success in the workplace. Partnerships with the Gies College of Business, the School of Labor and Employment Relations, the College of Media, the College of Education, the College of Applied Health Sciences, and the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences ensure that the BLS curriculum will be well-rounded and provide students with industry skills. Additionally, students interested in professional experiences will be able to enroll in LAS 302 and conduct a remote internship. The BLS Program has partnered with LAS Career Services (LAS 302) for remote internship opportunities in addition to traditional on-site placements, catering to the needs of working adult students. The BLS program will organize networking events to connect students with industry recruiters and hiring managers. The BLS team will explore opportunities to partner with alum associations, foundations, or corporations to establish need-based or merit-based scholarships. The BLS program is part of a larger effort from the College of LAS to expand its online, flexible learning opportunities. By offering internship and scholarship programs with businesses, the BLS program equips graduates for success and fuels the state's economy. This collaboration creates a highly skilled workforce, boosts business productivity, and attracts new companies, leading to a thriving economic environment.

Explain how the proposed program will expand its models of teaching and learning, research, and/or public service and outreach that provide opportunity for students to succeed in the work of the future.

Institution-level expansion of models:

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is a leader in the state in its cutting-edge teaching/learning, research, public service and outreach. The Online Learning Advisory Committee (OLAC) facilitates constructive dialogue among colleges, fostering collaboration to address pertinent issues, and insuring the continuous improvements of our online courses and programs. The group develops and delivers recommendations on how to design and deliver effective and meaningful online education and support for students. Those models of teaching and learning will be shared among the faculty and trainings will be developed to further impact the campus community. In the 2023-2024 academic year, OLAC focused on: 1) Developing a tuition model that allows student enrollment in online courses outside of their home colleges; 2) Identifying technologies that enhance the online experience; and 3) Elevating student belonging. OLAC receives quarterly report-outs from the new Big Ten Online Student Council, a recently chartered institutional peer group formed to address student issues in the online space.

College, department, and program expansion of models:

To meet the diverse learning needs of students, the BLS program will offer a combination of asynchronous online and synchronous online learning models. This approach allows students to access course materials at their convenience, promotes flexibility, and allows students to personalize their learning experience. Additionally, the interdisciplinary focus of the BLS program will go beyond traditional silos by incorporating courses from various disciplines to cultivate a strong core of transferable skills (communication, critical thinking, problem-solving) combined with adaptable expertise in specific areas.

Beyond workforce need, describe how the program broadly addresses societal needs (e.g., cultural or liberal arts contribution, lifelong learning of Illinois residents, or civic participation).

The BLS program's online format removes geographical barriers and allows working adults in Illinois to pursue higher education while balancing their work and personal lives. This promotes lifelong learning and personal growth for Illinois residents, regardless of location or stage of life. The BLS program allows learners to explore various disciplines within Liberal Arts and Sciences. This empowers them to pursue lifelong learning in areas that interest them, enriching their personal lives and potentially leading to new career paths or volunteer opportunities.

The BLS curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, analysis, and effective communication. This equips graduates to engage in thoughtful discussions about social issues, analyze information critically, and participate in civic life. The Liberal Arts and Sciences foundation of the BLS program also fosters cultural awareness and appreciation for diverse viewpoints, crucial for navigating today's world.

A Thriving Illinois:  
Higher Education  
Paths to Equity,  
Sustainability, and  
Growth - Attach  
Documents

## Program Description and Requirements

Illinois Administrative Code:

*1050.30(b)(1) A) The caliber and content to the curriculum assure that the objectives of the unit of instruction will be achieved; B) The breadth and depth of the curriculum are consistent with what the title of the unit of instruction implies; C) The admission and graduation requirements for the unit of instruction are consistent with the stated objectives of the unit of instruction.*

*1050.30(b)(3): Appropriate steps shall be taken to assure that professional accreditation needed for licensure or entry into a profession as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction is maintained or will be granted in a reasonable period of time.*

*1050.50 (a)(2)(C) Requirement for Programs in which State Licensure is Required for Employment in the Field: In the case of a program in which State licensure is required for employment in the field, a program can be found to be in good standing if the institution is able to provide evidence that program graduates are eligible to take the appropriate licensure examination and pass rates are maintained as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction. If there is no such evidence, the institution shall report the program as flagged for review.*

## Program Description

Provide a description of the proposed program and its curriculum, including a list of the required core courses and short ("catalog") descriptions of each one. (This list should identify all courses newly developed for the program).

Provide Program Description here:

The Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree-completion program allows students to explore various subject areas available across campus, while still having the opportunity to build strong foundational knowledge in the liberal arts. Students will work with an advisor from the College of LAS to select concentration(s) and coursework based on their interests to align their academic plans with their educational and career goals.

Students will earn a degree with a major indicated as Liberal Studies and have one or more concentrations noted on their transcript. Aligned with the University of Illinois' mission to transform lives through education, the online Bachelor of Liberal Studies offers a prestigious Illinois education to individuals facing geographic or other obstacles to traditional on-campus learning.

the Liberal Studies major is comprised of-

1. Core coursework, consisting of:

ACE 240, ADV 120, ADV 370, BADM 310, BTW 380, CMN 211, CMN 326, ECON 300, EPOL 310, GER 455, LAS 103, LEAD 440, LEAD 470, PHIL 442, PS 201, and STAT 100

2. Selection of at least 1 of the following Concentrations: Global Perspectives, Health and Society, and Management Studies. Students may select more than 1 concentration if they require additional credits to reach the 120 credit hours requirement for graduation.

Students in the program will complete at least 40 upper division hours through the required core coursework and selection of one Concentration.

1. Liberal Studies core coursework that counts toward upper division hours:

ECON 300 (3 hours), ADV 370 (3 hours), BADM 310 (3 hours), EPOL 310 (4 hours), CMN 326 (3 hours), BTW 380 (3 hours), LEAD 440 (2 hours), PHIL 442 (3 hours), GER 455 (3 hours), LEAD 470 (2 hours)

= 29 upper division hours

2. Concentration coursework that counts toward upper division hours:

Global Perspectives Concentration (15 upper division hours), Health and Society Concentration (12 upper division hours), Management Studies Concentration (11 to 12 upper division hours)

= 11-15 upper division hours

Attach Program [BLS Program Courses.docx](#)

Description Files if [Course Descriptions\\_Liberal Studies BLS.docx](#)  
needed

## Graduation Requirements

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Provide a brief narrative description of all graduation requirements, including, but not limited to, credit hour requirements, and, where relevant, requirements for internship, practicum, or clinical. For a graduate program, summarize information about the requirements for completion of the thesis or dissertation, including the thesis committees, and the final defense of the thesis or dissertation. If a thesis or dissertation is not required in a graduate program, explain how the functional equivalent is achieved.

Students must complete a total of 120 credit hours, including general education requirements, a third-semester college level of instruction in a language other than English, the university residency requirement of 45 hours of UIUC coursework of which 21 hours are 300 or 400 level courses, and a minimum of 40 hours total of upper division coursework is required for graduation.

### Plan to Evaluate and Improve the Program

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Describe the program's evaluation plan.

The BLS administration will use key performance indicators to evaluate the program annually.

The key performance indicators include:

- number of applications received
- enrollment figures disaggregated by gender, geography, URM status, concentration, and academic year
- retention rate percentage (within each course and online degree)
- learner experience rating (Likert-scale will be used to assess learner experience with the application, admissions, and enrollment processes, in addition to communication, course quality, live and asynchronous courses/sessions, access to faculty/instructors, and technical support)
- ICES course evaluations
- LAS Online course evaluations
- time to degree completion
- student performance metrics (course grades, GPA, etc)
- feedback from graduating students, employers, and alums via surveys

Plan to Evaluate  
and Improve the  
Program  
Attachments

### Budget Narrative

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#### Fiscal and Personnel Resources

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*Illinois Administrative Code: 1050.30(a)(5): A) The financial commitments to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are sufficient to ensure that the faculty and staff and support services necessary to offer the unit of instruction, research or public service can be acquired and maintained; B) Projections of revenues necessary to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are based*

*on supportable estimates of state appropriations, local tax support, student tuition and fees, private gifts, and/or governmental grants and contracts.*

## Budget Rationale

Provide financial data that document the university's capacity to implement and sustain the proposed program and describe the program's sources of funding.

Is the unit's (Department, College, School) current budget adequate to support the program when fully implemented? If new resources are to be provided to the unit to support the program, what will be the source(s) of these funds? Is the program requesting new state funds? (During recent years, no new funds have been available from the state (IBHE) to support new degree programs).

Yes. The College of LAS budget, with the addition of the Investment for Growth grant received for this program, is adequate to support the program when fully implemented. No new state funds are requested.

## Faculty Resources

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Will current faculty be adequate to provide instruction for the new program or will additional faculty need to be hired? If additional hires will be made, please elaborate.

Yes, current faculty and instructors are adequate. If enrollments eventually grow more than anticipated, then the departments will request additional instructional staffing, appealing to the enrollment-driven portion of the university's budget allocation policy. There is currently excess capacity to address the expected relatively minor increases in enrollments due to this program.

Please address the impact on faculty resources including any changes in numbers of faculty, class size, teaching loads, student-faculty ratios, etc.

The current faculty will be adequate to provide instruction. The departments included in the proposed curriculum currently have the capacity to address the expected relatively minor increases in enrollments due to this program. No additional support is needed at this time. Should demand for the courses exceed expectations and more sessions of the courses need to be offered, additional faculty may need to be hired to maintain an appropriate teacher-student ratio.

Describe how the unit will support student advising, including job placement and/or admission to advanced studies.

Will current staff be adequate to implement and maintain the new program or will additional staff be hired? Will current advising staff be adequate to provide student support and advisement, including job placement and or admission to advanced studies? If additional hires will be made, please elaborate.

The LAS Student Academic Affairs Office staff will provide student support in admissions, enrollment services, career and graduate school advising services, and academic records support. The BLS program budget allows for the hiring of 2 academic advisors, 1 coordinator, and 1 assistant director specifically for BLS students in the first 5 years of the program to accommodate expected enrollment and increased need for student services and programming.

Are the unit's current facilities adequate to support the program when fully implemented? Will there need to be facility renovation or new construction to house the program?

The unit's current facilities are adequate to support the program. Administrative offices are located in the English Building (608 S. Wright Street Urbana) and the Student Academic Affairs Office in Lincoln Hall (702 S. Wright Street Urbana). Faculty also have full access to the suite of CITL media studios to record video content and create materials for the course. The courses that comprise this program will be offered 100% online. No classroom space is needed.

## Library Resources

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Describe your proposal's impact on the University Library's resources, collections, and services. If necessary please consult with the appropriate disciplinary specialist within the University Library.

Given the projected size and growth of the program (currently estimated at 50 students per year, with a max size between 200-300 students) as well as the course of study, Library collections, resources, and services are anticipated to be sufficient to support this program.

The new online Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) program is expected to bring additional students to use the University Library's collections and services. However, the projected volume of students is not anticipated to make a large enough impact to necessitate additional library resources. The program's curriculum heavily relies on existing undergraduate-level courses from the College of LAS and other campus partners that correspond to areas already well-supported by the current collections and services. The library's level of on-demand research help, consultation services, and teaching and learning support currently have capacity to meet the increased demands anticipated by the launch of this program.

We've consulted with Tom Teper (Associate Dean & Associate University Librarian) and David Ward (Director of Library Teaching & Learning and Undergraduate Services Coordinator) regarding the Library System's capacity. They feel as though the Library is well positioned from a collections standpoint. However, they acknowledge the ongoing campus growth and online program expansion will put pressure on library resources beyond collections, such as staffing to provide teaching, learning, and research support. This is particularly pertinent to this program as online students do not currently pay the Library/IT fee that is assessed to all on-campus students. The BLS team will maintain close communication with David Ward as the program develops to ensure the library remains informed and supported.

Summarize information about library resources for the program, including a list of key textbooks, a list of key text and electronic journals that will support this program, and a short summary of general library resources of the University that will be used by the program's faculty, students, and staff.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign boasts the second-largest public academic research library in the U.S., housing a massive collection exceeding 14-million volumes and 24-million items across various formats and languages. This includes an impressive array of resources: 9-million microforms, nearly half a million print and electronic serials combined, 2-million electronic books, over 600,000 physical and digital media materials, millions of pages of manuscripts, and 629,000 maps. These vast collections support scholarship and research across all disciplines.

The library offers extensive interlibrary loan and document delivery services. The library will mail books from the collections or provide copied articles, chapters, and other materials through their DocExpress service. Illinois residents in the BLS program can leverage I-Share for additional resources, while BLS students outside Illinois can explore the library's Reciprocal Borrowing Agreements with other academic libraries.

The University Library's disciplinary specialists provide a range of research, instructional and student success support programs, all of which contribute to the successful delivery of our services. Evie Cordell, the Library's E-Learning Librarian, has been brought into discussions about the developing BLS. She will develop a Canvas module "General Library Resources" for the BLS onboarding course (LAS 103) designed to introduce online students to the library and provide information on how to access resources and get started with research. Moreover, she will develop a template and coordinate with other subject librarians to create or update online class guides and tutorials on conducting academic research in their discipline. Complimenting these class guides will be the University Library's strong program of both synchronous chat-reference services ("Ask-A-Librarian"), research support, and reference consultation services. Ask A Librarian support is available during the evening and weekend hours when BLS students are anticipated to need support most.

The majority of the BLS curriculum draws upon existing online courses, all of which utilize the library's extensive online resources for required readings. This approach ensures a seamless learning experience, with all course materials readily available through the University's collection of print and online journals, books, and databases. Open-source, peer-reviewed journals will also be included, providing a well-rounded and accessible collection of scholarly materials.

A list of electronic databases/journals that will support the BLS program:

- Resources through the Communications Library - ProQuest One Business, Hoover's Academic Pro, Ad Age Publications, Harvard Business Review, Communication Source Database
- Resources through the History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library - Philosopher's Index, PhilPapers
- Resources through the Social Sciences, Health, and Education Library - JSTOR, Project MUSE.



Are any sources of funding temporary (e.g., grant funding)? If so, how will the program be sustained once these funds are exhausted?

Library resources and services will be provided using existing state-funded collection allocations. No temporary funding will be needed for these resources and services.

Budget Narrative  
Fiscal and  
Personnel  
Resources  
Attachments

Personnel Budget

CategoryYear OneYear FiveNotes

Faculty (FTE)

Faculty FTE Year1	Faculty FTE Year 5	Faculty FTE Notes
0	0	N/A- students in program are filling existing capacity in courses

Faculty (\$)

Faculty Year 1	Faculty Year 5	Faculty Notes
0	0	N/A- students in program are filling existing capacity in courses

Advising Staff (\$)

Advising Staff Year 1	Advising Staff Year 5	Advising Staff Notes
50000	115000	Assuming 200 enrolled students in Year 5 needing 2 advisors

Graduate Students  
(\$)

Graduate Students Year 1	Graduate Students Year 5	Graduate Students Notes
0	0	N/A

Other Personnel  
Costs

Other Personnel Costs Year 1	Other Personnel Costs Year 5	Other Personnel Costs Notes
240000	240000	Assuming need Coordinator and Asst. Director level support by Year 5

Budget Narrative

Attachments

Facilities and Equipment

*Illinois Administrative Code: 1050.30(a)(4): A) Facilities, equipment and instructional resources (e.g., laboratory supplies and equipment, instructional materials, computational equipment) necessary to support high quality academic work in the unit of instruction, research or public service are available and maintained;*

*B) Clinical sites necessary to meet the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service;*

*C) Library holdings and acquisitions, owned or contracted for by the institution, that are necessary to support high quality instruction and scholarship in the unit of instruction, research and public service, are conveniently available and accessible, and can be maintained.*

Describe the facilities and equipment that are available, or that will be available, to develop and maintain high quality in this program. Summarize information about buildings, classrooms, office space, laboratories and equipment, and other instructional technologies for the program.

The unit's current facilities are adequate to support the program. Administrative offices are located in the English Building (608 S. Wright Street Urbana) and the Student Academic Affairs Office in Lincoln Hall (702 S. Wright Street Urbana). Faculty also have full access to the suite of CITL media studios to record video content and create materials for the course. The courses that comprise this program will be offered 100% online. No classroom space is needed.

Will the program require new or additional facilities or significant improvements to already existing facilities?

No

Will the program need additional technology beyond what is currently available for the unit?

No

Are there other costs associated with implementing the program?

No

Facilities and  
Equipment  
Attachments

Faculty and Staff

*Illinois Administrative Code: 1050.30(a)(3): A) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff ensure that the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are met; B) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff, as evidenced by level of degrees held, professional experience in the field of study and demonstrated knowledge of the field, ensure that they are able to fulfill their academic responsibilities; C) The involvement of faculty in the unit of instruction, research or public service is sufficient to cover the various fields of knowledge encompassed by the unit, to sustain scholarship appropriate to the unit, and to assure curricular continuity and consistency in student evaluation; D) Support personnel, including but not limited to counselors, administrators, clinical supervisors, and technical staff, which are directly assigned to the unit of instruction, research or public service, have the educational background and experience necessary to carry out their assigned responsibilities.*

Describe the personnel resources available to develop and maintain a high quality program, including faculty (full- and part-time, current and new), staff (full- and part-time, current and new), and the administrative structure that will be in place to oversee the program. Also include a description of faculty qualifications, the faculty evaluation and reward structure, and student support services that will be provided by faculty and staff.

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences has over 600 tenure system faculty members across 37 academic departments, 5 schools, 9 centers, and institutes. Additionally, the proposed curriculum includes courses that will rely on instructional support from faculty in the College of Applied Health Sciences, College of Media, Gies College of Business, College of Agricultural & Consumer Economics, College of Education, and the School of Labor & Employment Relations. The Student Academic Affairs Office (SAAO) within the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences has over 40 full-time staff members who will be involved in supporting the proposed degree, along with a dedicated team of staff members designated solely to support the BLS degree. There are currently 2 full-time staff members designated to solely support the BLS degree and a personnel plan to grow the BLS-dedicated staff as enrollment scales. Academic advising, student programming, career services, and support will be provided centrally by the LAS SAAO office and the BLS staff. This existing faculty within the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, other campus units, and the administrative structure within the SAAO office and BLS team is currently sufficient to support the new degree.

Summarize the major accomplishments of each key faculty member, including research/scholarship, publications, grant awards, honors and awards, etc. Include an abbreviated curriculum vitae or a short description.

See attached document for major accomplishments of current, key faculty members involved in the BLS Major core curriculum.

Faculty and Staff

Attachments

[Major Accomplishments of Faculty\\_Liberal Studies BLS.docx](#)

## HLC Section

### Credit Hours

Existing or repackaged curricula (Courses from existing inventory of courses):	Number of Credit Hours:	111 93	Percent of Total:
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Revised or redesigned curricula (Courses for which content has been revised for the new program):	Number of Credit Hours:	0	Percent of Total:
New curricula (Courses developed for the new program that have never been offered):	Number of Credit Hours:	9	Percent of Total:
Total Credit Hours of the Program:	Number of Credit Hours:	120	Percent of Total:
		100	

### New Faculty Required

Will new faculty expertise or new faculty members be needed to launch this program?

No

Please explain existing coverage: No new faculty will be needed to launch this program.

### Additional Funds

Will the proposed program require a large outlay of additional funds by the institution?

No

### Institutional Funding

Please explain institutional funding for proposed program:

The College of LAS received an FY23 funded Investment for Growth. The IFG will enable us to initially fund the BLS program; funds have been used for the salaries of administrative staff and student services. IFG funds are also providing stipends for instructors and course development specialists to develop new or modify existing online courses in the BLS Program.

Revenue generated through student tuition will cover additional expenses, further course development/production, and operational costs.

### EP Documentation

EP Control Number EP.25.048

Attach Rollback/  
Approval Notices

### Non-EP Documentation

U Program Review  
Comments

Rollback  
Documentation and  
Attachment

DMI Documentation

Attach Final      [U Program Review Comments KEY 1246 Liberal Studies,](#)  
Approval Notices      [BLS\\_9\\_17\\_2024.docx](#)  
                                 [U Program Review Comments KEY 1246 Liberal Studies, BLS](#)  
                                 [10\\_10\\_2024.docx](#)  
                                 [U Program Review Comments KEY 1246 Liberal Studies, BLS](#)  
                                 [11\\_6\\_2024.docx](#)

Banner/Codebook  
Name

Program Code:

Minor	Conc	Degree	
Code	Code	Code	Major
			Code

Senate Approval  
Date  
  
Senate Conference  
Approval Date  
  
BOT Approval Date  
  
IBHE Approval Date  
  
HLC Approval Date  
  
DOE Approval Date  
  
Effective Date:

Program Reviewer Comments	<p><b>Brooke Newell (bsnewell) (08/30/24 4:31 pm):</b> Rollback: Per request from Jessica</p> <p><b>Brooke Newell (bsnewell) (09/17/24 10:18 am):</b> U Program Review Comments attached in the DMI Documentation section.</p> <p><b>Brooke Newell (bsnewell) (09/17/24 10:39 am):</b> Rollback: Rolled back per request of sponsors</p> <p><b>Brooke Newell (bsnewell) (10/10/24 8:41 am):</b> U Program Review Comments are attached in the DMI Documentation section</p> <p><b>Stephen Downie (sdownie) (10/24/24 3:37 pm):</b> Rollback: Per sponsor's request.</p> <p><b>Brooke Newell (bsnewell) (11/06/24 8:02 am):</b> U Program Review Comments are attached in the DMI Documentation Section.</p>
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**Brooke Newell (bsnewell) (01/22/25 10:25 am):** Updated CIM-P form with required prompts in line with sponsor proposal, post CIM-P revision

**Barbara Lehman (bjlehman) (03/07/25 1:57 pm):** Rollback: As discussed at the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) meeting on Monday, March 3, 2025, SEC recommended that the BLS proposals (EP.25.047-051) be returned to the sponsors. SEC requested the BLS proposals not include an exception to reduce the language other than English (LOTE) requirement.