

# (66) BUSINESS CASE: ACADEMIC EXPLORER

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The UW Academic Explorer (UWAE) project will provide students with a single integrated tool for exploring degree programs, assessing personal and academic fit with these programs, discovering 'like' majors, identifying competitive and minimum-admission-requirement majors, and developing back-up plans. Additionally, thanks to associated efforts funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), UWAE will be available to prospective students, allowing them to engage meaningfully with the UW's curriculum prior to applying to the UW.

## KEY OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

The objectives of the UWAE project are to:

**Increase the efficiency of degree attainment:** Over 80% of students complete with more credits than required by their degree (33% of these students have more than 30 additional credits), and only 56% complete on time – indicating that there is definite room for improvement with regard to degree attainment.

- UWAE will help students find their 'best fit' degree earlier in their academic career, reducing the number of credits that don't apply toward graduation and decreasing changes in major.

**Make it easier for students to select a major that fits their interests and skills:** 40% of 594 pre-majors surveyed indicated that the overall process of choosing a major is difficult or very difficult. Key frustrations include finding relevant information, understanding true entrance requirements of competitive majors and developing back-up plans.

- UWAE will serve as a central repository for information about degree programs at the UW, making it easier to find and compare information. Additionally, UWAE will focus on bringing transparency to the competitiveness of majors that have competitive entrance requirements.

**Provide a more meaningful way for prospective students to explore the UW's curriculum and conceptualize their UW experience:** Engagement of prospective students is strongly correlated to acceptance of an admissions offer.

- UWAE will provide a meaningful way for prospective students to interact with the UW's curricular offerings and conceptualize their UW experience.

## TIMELINE ESTIMATE

Estimate of Project Duration (#of Months):	12	Start date (Month, Year):	November 2014
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## BUDGET ESTIMATE – complete the yellow boxes (double-click)

	Implementation		Ongoing (Annual)	
Contributed Labor (# of Hours @ \$107):	13,100	\$ 1,401,700	1,600	\$ 171,200
New Labor (# of FTE @ \$135,000/yr):		\$ -		\$ -
HW/SW/Other non-Labor Expenses:		\$ -		\$ -
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$ 1,401,700</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 171,200</b>

## FUNDING

How will this project be funded? (check all that apply)  Existing UW-IT Budget  Provost  Self-sustaining, grant, other

Are the funds for this project already committed?

**Implementation:** Partially **Explain:** Portion of team funded on perm allocation; this work will follow the MyPlan efforts related to CTC2UW and STFC YR3; Funding request already submitted to STFC.

**Ongoing (annual):**  Yes: Perm allocation that funds part of development covers support costs.

## PROJECT DEPENDENCIES

**Curriculum Management Implementation (underway)** – UW Academic Explorer will source program descriptors from Curriculum Management; **MyPlan CTC2UW and YR3 (underway)** – The ability for UWAE to provide benefit to prospective students is dependent on implementation of social authentication for MyPlan, which is part of the CTC2UW stream of work within the MyPlan project.

## PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

### 1. Strategic Value

**1. Does this project improve the University's academic or research excellence?**

Yes. UWAE is intended to increase the efficiency of degree attainment, which will improve the UW's degree completion metrics. Completion metrics (e.g., % students who complete in four years) are an indication of value for dollar, as well as curricular effectiveness. Additionally, with increased efficiency of degree attainment comes an increase in throughput and associated increased availability of seats in high-demand majors.

**2. Does it improve the UW's competitiveness by helping to attract the best students, faculty, and staff or by increasing and diversifying funding?**

Yes. With the addition of social authentication (funded by BMGF, and part of the MyPlan effort), UWAE will provide a much more efficient way for prospective students to explore the UW's curricular offerings, and begin to engage conceptually with what working toward a UW degree would entail. Engagement during the prospective and applicant phases of the student life-cycle has strong correlation to acceptance of an admissions offer, so UWAE is expected to become an important tool for recruiting and admitting high-achieving students.

**3. Does it enhance interdisciplinary collaboration in research, instruction, or other University efforts across organizational, regional, or global boundaries?**

Yes. UWAE is intended to help students 'traverse' the UW's curricular offerings by making it easier to find related programs. The UWAE tools that will support students in identifying cross-curricular linkages will also provide a new way for the University's academic leaders to view and understand connections across our academic programs, which may lead to identification of academic collaborations.

### 2. Impact

**4. Does this project improve the personal productivity or experience of students, faculty, or staff (i.e. individual end user of system or service)?**

Yes. UWAE will greatly enhance the student experience by helping students find their best academic home early in their academic career, allowing them to optimize their course work toward degree completion, and decrease time and money spent in courses not aligned with their degree requirements. Additionally, by bringing together information about competitive majors, UWAE will reduce frustration that students have about the lack of transparency about the competitiveness of majors and will also make it easier for them to identify viable back-up options.

**5. Does it benefit a large number of UW students, faculty, or staff?**

Yes. UWAE will benefit all students, specifically during times when they are still deciding upon a major. Additionally, through our collaboration with the BMGF, the UWAE project will benefit prospective students.

**6. Does it improve administrative efficiency or reduce overall administrative costs for the University (and not by shifting costs to units)?**

Yes. UWAE's focus is on academic efficiency (increasing throughput to graduation thereby freeing up space for incoming students) rather than administrative efficiency.

### 3. Risk

**7. Does this project help sustain and strengthen core IT operations, mitigate operational risk, or ensure key services are resilient?**

Yes. As a continuation of UW-IT's Quali-based efforts, funding of UWAE sustains key personnel and skills that will be necessary for replacing SDB and other legacy systems with Quali Student. Failure to retain existing staffing and skillsets will result in increased costs and project delays for future replacement-related efforts.

**8. Does this project address compliance, financial, or information security and privacy risk? No.**

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DATE: 1.27.14

APPROVED BY (Division Head): Philip J. Reid

DATE: 1.27.14

*Proposal not to exceed two pages to this point (Summary through Importance Criteria)*