

## **Report on the Undergraduate Dual Degree Program between Moscow State University and George Mason University**

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### **1. Introductory Background**

In 2009, George Mason University began operating a dual degree program in partnership with Moscow State University's (MSU's) Economics Department. The program was established through a faculty member's direct connection to MSU. Students enrolled in this program will receive degrees from two institutions, one from GMU and one from MSU, Russia's leading institution of higher education. Undergraduate degrees are offered with majors in Economics and Management.

### **2. Program Goals**

- a. Expand GMU's and MSU's global partnerships.
- b. Provide cross-cultural learning experiences for MSU and George Mason students.
- c. Create opportunities for MSU and George Mason faculty to collaborate on economic and business issues, both in research and teaching, through direct exchange and other activities.
- d. Provide MSU faculty the opportunity to teach in George Mason along with learning experiences in the Greater Washington area.

### **3. Description of the Original Program**

#### **a. Dual Degree**

- i. GMU Requirements – admissions requirement did not include TOEFL which sometimes resulted in the acceptance of students who were not prepared for college level courses in English; graduation requirements were in line with a 4-year BS in Economics or Management; students were required to live on campus, but program policies did not require them to live in LLC and did not encourage students to be engaged through volunteering and participating in Russian club activities. Faculty "research" was generally limited to library visits and working on individual research rather than collaboratively. The research stipend was not directly connected to developing collaborative projects with Mason faculty. Attention to student and faculty compliance with Mason academic, housing, and ethics policies was not a focus.
- ii. MSU Requirements – a more rigid program of study with very few electives; much higher academic load than at Mason; many students are on government-financed "spots"; course retake means retaking final exam (not allowed at Mason, as each failed course needs to be taken over again). Grades often do not reflect the knowledge or abilities.

**b. Program Academic Schedule**

- i. First Semester at MSU
- ii. Next Three Semesters at GMU taught by MSU Faculty
- iii. Last Four Semesters “mainstreamed” at GMU

**c. Enrollment Levels under the Original Program.**

Two cohorts of students are enrolled in the program. Three students (out of 7 admitted) have matriculated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mason year in first, and five (out of 8 admitted) in the second. The first graduates are expected in Spring-Summer 2013, unless students take a semester/ year off or reduce their load to a minimum allowable 12 credits per semester.

**4. Challenges Identified with the Original Program**

The program originated through the faculty member who is no longer at Mason. Since May the program is being reevaluated against its original goals and GMU’s focus on educating globally competent students. I will start with the original goals found in the 2009 MOU, describe where the program is in relation to these goals as well as the ways it contributes to achieving GMU’s strategic goals.

**5. Proposed Changes in the Program in Response to these Challenges**

- a. Program Academic Schedule.** Students spend the first year at MSU (instead of one semester), the second year at Mason is taught by MSU faculty at GMU, year 3-4 as mainstream Mason students. Between year 1 and 2, a separate cohort may begin for students with limited English ability. This ELI cohort will spend an extra year (1a) before joining the regular program track.
- b. Curriculum.** The MSU curriculum has undergone minor changes in the context of the Bologna Process agreements. New MSU schedule involves changing the course sequence in the program, evaluating new (to Mason) courses. Office of Global Strategies will work with the Registrar’s office, Admissions, and Advising on implementation.
- c. Student campus integration and engagement.** Participation in Living Learning Community (Global Crossings or Service Learning) for the 1<sup>st</sup> (MSU year) and ELI year will be required. Enrollment in University 100 or equivalent will be required.
- d. Admissions.**
  - i. **Dates.** Will follow the Mason academic calendar for MSU-taught cohort (March 15th.) (For ELI cohorts, the deadline is May 15<sup>th</sup> in order to meet internal housing needs.)
  - ii. **Requirements.** Program admissions will be more selective (This will include references from the faculty members and/ or Vice-Dean for academic affairs; interviews; academic standing).
  - i. **English Language Ability.** TOEFL score of at least 88 or ELI referral.

- e. **Minimum enrollment and recruitment.** Under new MSU curriculum load, ten students are needed to operate the cohort self-sufficiently.
- f. **Tuition.** Per Credit as per Mason Policies as opposed to flat rate.
- g. **Program policies.** Resolving the MOU language: gray areas in translation and meaning need to be addressed, i.e. what to do when a student gets an F; the difference between an IN and a F. Once the amended MOU signed, all agreements will translate into program policies to be placed on the program web site.
- h. **Pre-departure orientation.**
  - i. **Students.** Pre-departure orientation (through a partnership with American Councils/ Education USA advising center in Moscow or MSU coordinators); including a comprehensive overview of differences between higher education systems and Mason policies – require students’ signature.
  - ii. **Faculty.** Develop an electronic version of faculty orientation to be “taken” before arrival; include a signature line in the contact appendix.
- i. **MSU faculty compliance with Mason academic policies.** Provide a page on academic integrity, grading policies (include detailed explanation of IN), honor code compliance as an appendix to the faculty contract – require signature.
- j. **MSU-GMU faculty Research Collaboration.**
  - i. Encourage collaboration, but pay the research stipend only to the MSU faculty who have prearranged and begun working with MSU faculty on a specific research, teaching, program development, or conference/ publishing project.
  - ii. GMU faculty and community members to serve as hospitality partners and hosts to have the MSU faculty over for a meal or tea and conversation
  - iii. Mentoring Russian faculty in the Western approach to research writing and using electronic databases
  - iv. Establishing a network of faculty members for connecting MSU faculty with potential GMU research partners
  - v. Avenue where ideas for joint projects and funding opportunities could be connected with researchers from both universities to foster innovation and collaboration
- k. **Faculty SEVIS fee and taxes.**
  - i. Immigration SEVIS fee - to be paid by the faculty.
  - ii. Income taxes - Include tax into the salary and suggest MSU faculty the ways to file income taxes from abroad to claim the overpayment.
- l. **Partnerships with academic Departments.**
  - i. MSU MBA students to participate in the summer program at the SOM’s Center for Global Innovation and Transformation.
- m. **Building GMU-MSU University-wide partnership beyond the undergraduate dual degree program**

- i. extended by 5 years – but three MSU departments are required for Mason to be considered a full partner
  - ii. MSU Political Science School (together with Economics School) to establish a dual MPA with Mason
  - iii. Short term, summer institutes, conferences, faculty research invitation from Political Science Department
  - iv. MSU’s Innovation Studio and School of Public Administration are potential partners.
- n. Support fees to be paid to SOM and Economics department for student advising.**
- o. Developing a program website.** In-depth program overview, coursework detailed, program policies, cost breakdown, outbound orientation for students and faculty, separate place with information for parents.

## **6. Plans for the 2012-13 Academic Year**

- a.** No incoming cohort for either MSU-taught or ELI-year in 2012-2013. 10 students minimum is needed to operate the next cohort
- b.** Recruitment is dependent on partner institution.
  - i.** Due to the program costs and internal politics, MSU has not recruited the necessary 10 students
  - ii.** MSU has also not being able to recruit a cohort of students, who would begin with the whole extra year of ELI
  - iii.** Recruiting quality students whose families are also able to afford this program will remain a problem unless MSU establishes partnerships with Russian donors and business community to support the deserving students.
- c. Preparing for 2013-2014 admissions.** MSU is working on establishing a separate, direct admissions process for Business majors. This, however, remains an issue due to the Economics College-Rector tensions. In addition, the quality of students entering the “fee-based” Business major is lower than the merit-based Economics program. If MSU follows through with this direct admission, Mason will need to institute some internal admissions criteria to ensure quality of incoming students (possibly using Russia’s National Entrance Exam Scores).