OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

New Actuarial Science major approved to begin in fall 2010

By Dan Bodene, contributing writer

A new Bachelor of Science major in Actuarial Science was approved by Oakland University's Board of Trustees this March.

The degree will be offered by the College of Arts and Sciences, although the School of Business Administration will help administer the program. CAS and SBA each will provide about half the courses to complete the major.

Actuarial science is the discipline that applies mathematical and statistical methods to assess risk in the insurance and finance industries. Actuaries analyze data to estimate the probability and likely cost to a company of an event such as death, sickness, injury, disability or loss of property.

Several Michigan public universities offer programs in actuarial science, but OU's will be the only one offered in the metro Detroit area – where most firms in the state that employ actuaries are located. OU's program is more interdisciplinary than traditional programs at some other schools, which could give OU graduates another advantage in the actuarial field.

To complete the Actuarial Sciences major, OU students must earn credits in mathematics, statistics, economics, finance, financial accounting, computer problem-solving and business writing.

"This is one of several interdisciplinary majors we will be adding to our offerings in the College of Arts and Sciences," said Dr. Ronald Sudol, dean of the CAS. "Through strategic packaging of key courses in mathematics, statistics, economics, and finance, we are able to offer a new major by adding only one new course, and we already have a fully qualified faculty to run this program. This is a cost-effective way to serve the specialized needs of our students."

The coursework will prepare students to take the first two of four basic professional qualifying exams during their junior and senior years. Most firms that hire actuaries don't expect new graduates to have taken those exams, said Dr. Ron Tracy, associate professor of economics. Those who did will have an advantage, he added.

"This is a very tough curriculum, but it offers unbelievable opportunities," Dr. Tracy said. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor's 2008-09 Occupational Outlook Handbook predicts an approximate 24 percent increase in the employment of actuaries from 2006-2016.

Because of the difficulty of the curriculum, it's estimated only about five students per academic year will be enrolled in Oakland's program, which will begin in the fall 2010 semester. Graduates will not only be able to enter the actuarial field, but also will be well-positioned to work toward advanced degrees in economics, mathematics, statistics, business and law.

Dr. Tracy helped develop the program along with Dr. Darrell Schmidt, professor, and Dr. Theophilus Ogunyemi, associate professor, both of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. They surveyed students, talked to firms that hire actuaries and researched nationwide job opportunities before proposing the new program at OU.

"It's a nice blend of two disciplines," said Dr. Tracy. "Those who can master it will have avenues open to them that other majors don't provide."

For more information about Oakland's programs, visit the **CAS Web site** and the **SBA Web site**.

SUMMARY
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