

# The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

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## PROPOSAL 2-98

### PRE-LAW OPTION IN THE BS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES DEGREE

Michigan Technological University will award the Pre-Law Option in the BS in Social Sciences Degree as described below.

#### **Proposal Background**

American law schools, unlike American medical schools, do not prescribe either a particular major or series of courses, advocating, instead, a broad-based undergraduate education. Nonetheless, three of Michigan's fourteen, public, four-year universities (Lake Superior State, Michigan State, and Northern Michigan), as well as some of the state's private schools (Adrian, Sienna Heights, Michigan Christian), have clearly designated pre-law programs.

In the fall of 1996 Provost Dobney established a committee to review the status of pre-professional programs at Michigan Tech. The October 28, 1996, report to the Provost, prepared by the Chair of that Committee, Stephen Bowen, made several pertinent observations and recommendations. First, the report noted that pre-professional programs at Michigan Tech (especially pre-law) were not well promoted. Second, the report noted that pre-professional programs like pre-law had the potential to improve retention and recruitment of undergraduate students and to shift enrollments to departments capable to taking on a larger number of majors.

Believing that the neglect of pre-law at Michigan Tech is in part a result of no one unit at the university having clear responsibility, the Chair of the Department of Social Sciences in the summer of 1997 began collecting information on how pre-law training was handled in all Michigan colleges and relevant publications from the Law School Admission Council. Following development of a draft pre-law curriculum for the Department of Social Sciences, he submitted that draft to the Department's Curriculum Committee for review, and then to the Department's faculty. On October 30, 1997, the Department of Social Sciences faculty unanimously approved adding a pre-law option to the existing B.S. in Social Sciences Degree. Documents relating to the proposed curriculum, including proposed catalog copy, are attached.

#### **Justification**

*The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools* (published by the Law School Admission Council) notes that "because a lawyer's work involves most aspects of our complex society, a broad liberal arts curriculum is the preferred preparation for law school." The majors that law students most frequently select to develop the necessary skills and secure a broad, liberal arts education are all social sciences: political science, economics, history, and sociology. Moreover, pre-law programs are most frequently housed in departments of political science. Hence the Department of Social Sciences seems the most logical home for such a program at Michigan Tech.

#### **Need**

Addition of a pre-law option to the Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences is justified by several factors:

(1) The Department of Social Sciences is capable of carrying out the function at minimal expense. Moreover, the Department of Social Sciences can absorb additional majors without undue pressure on

departmental resources.

(2) The proposed option contributes towards the university and departmental goals of increasing enrollment.

(3) The proposed option contributes to Michigan Tech's goal [Goal 4.1.2 of "1998 and Beyond"] of recruiting and retaining a high quality, diverse student body by attracting students who would enhance the intellectual diversity of the student body.

(4) Pre-legal training has no firm institutional home at Michigan Tech.

### **Administration**

The program would be administered by the Department of Social Sciences with assistance from a campus-wide Pre-Law Advisory Committee.

### **Budget Implications**

All of the courses required to put the new degree option on a solid base, save two, already exist in the Department of Social Sciences or in other units at Michigan Tech. The two needed courses are:

(1) A one- or two-credit orientation course to inform students on careers in law and the law school admission process and to prepare them for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

(2) A broad-based course on 'Law and American Society.'

Course (2) can ultimately be handled internally by faculty currently teaching SS230 (American National Government). To fund Course (1), the Department of Social Sciences requests the addition of \$1500 to its base budget. These funds would be used to hire an adjunct faculty member - perhaps a person in the local legal community - to teach the one-credit annual orientation course mentioned above.

Although considerable material relating to the status of laws and legislation is available electronically through the Van Pelt Library's internet access [including legal indices on 'First Search' and information on the status of legislation on 'Congressional Compass,' some printed material is absolutely necessary. The Department of Social Sciences thus requests that a one-time sum of \$1000 be set aside to purchase relevant books for the library.

**Adopted by Senate: March 25, 1998**

**Approved by President: April 21, 1998**