

Top-Down New Program Opportunity Analyses

Internal and External Analyses to Stimulate Opportunistic, Market-Responsive Ideas

The table below outlines six proven analyses for surfacing new program ideas. The analyses yield opportunities that are both in-demand and aligned with institutional mission. The first three use internal institutional data to identify program ideas, while the latter three evaluate external data.

Leaders should conduct these analyses at least annually to identify and respond to new opportunities. After surfacing ideas, leaders should engage faculty champions to prepare business cases and usher proposals through approval and launch processes.

	Analysis	Description	Example
Internal Analyses	Excess Capacity	Institutions combine underutilized resources (i.e., course, faculty, staff, facilities) from existing programs to launch new programs with few new resource investments.	University of the Pacific is drawing on existing faculty, staff, course, and space capacity in School of Health Sciences and School of Business to launch new M.S. in Health Analytics. The program will require only minor new investments in teaching faculty and facilities renovations.
	Incremental Additions	Departments launch programs that build on existing foundational faculty, courses, and facilities. Programs create new economies of scale and improve the marketability of the overall department.	University of Maryland-University College first invested in a master’s in cybersecurity, then later launched a suite of related certificates and degrees that scaled its foundational investment. They currently offer five master’s and six certificate programs with cybersecurity at the core.
	Brand Synergies	Leaders launch programs in areas of existing brand strength. Such programs attract prospective students who are already familiar with institution’s reputation or evaluating similar programs at the institution.	The University of New England launched bachelor’s in health, wellness, and occupational studies program that aligns with institutional reputation as leader in health-related fields. Program serves as an “off-ramp” for students who came to UNE for pre-health programs but struggled with lab-intensive coursework, allowing the institution to retain students who may have otherwise transferred.
External Analyses	Student Interest	Institutions use independent majors requested by current students to surface new program ideas. These programs inherently align with emerging student preferences and are quick to launch, since they already obtained senate approval.	American University monitors student requests for independent majors and automatically adds majors to the academic portfolio after three requests. Several popular interdisciplinary studies programs have launched through this process.
	Employer Demand	Leaders consult local employers, part-time professional faculty, and real-time labor data to determine emerging employer skills demands.	Adjunct faculty at The New School recommended a new certificate in strategic design and management, projecting approximately 300 enrollments in program’s first year.
	Industry Trends	Institutions analyze labor market and macro-industry trends to anticipate future demands for new educational programs. Examples include new technologies (e.g., self-driving cars), legislation (e.g., MACRA ¹), demographic shifts (e.g., aging population), and economic trends (e.g., emergence of gig economy).	Duke University launched Paralegal Certificate in Elder Law in recognition of aging population. Program curriculum covers wills, estates, discrimination, health care access, and grandparent rights.

Download analyses reference guide at eab.com/baf/programlaunchtools.



1) Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015.

Source: University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA; University of Maryland-University College, Adelphi, MD; University of New England, Biddeford, ME; American University, Washington, DC; The New School, New York, NY; “Duke Paralegal Specialist Certificates, Duke University Continuing Studies, <http://www.learnmore.duke.edu/certificates/paralegal>; Business Affairs Forum interviews and analysis.