

7 May 2021

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Paul Loikith, Chair, Graduate Council

RE: Graduate Certificate in Futures Thinking and Foresight Practice

The following proposal has been approved by the Graduate Council or Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and is recommended for approval by the Faculty Senate.

You may read the full text of the program proposal, as well as Faculty Budget Committee comments, at the [Online Curriculum Management System \(OCMS\) Curriculum Dashboard](#).

PROPOSAL SUMMARY FOR Graduate School

Graduate Certificate in Futures Thinking and Foresight Practice

Certificate Type

Graduate certificate: Admission to graduate status required

Effective Term

Fall 2021

Overview of the Program

This certificate grows out of work that long-time (20+ year) Social Work Faculty member Dr. Laura Nissen has been doing throughout her career. In 2000, when she first arrived at PSU, she led a national juvenile justice reform project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation which is where she first began using foresight in practice. Years later, she decided to do a deep dive and invest in obtaining training and developing scholarship in this interdisciplinary space. In the past three years, she has developed a campus-wide initiative known as the [PSU Futures Collaboratory](#) where approximately 60 people have now received futures / foresight training as well as engaged in some "future of PSU" specific projects and practical explorations. Additionally, she applied for and received a national grant from RWJF to launch a national [social work health futures lab](#) - which is an opportunity to bring futures thinking to the social work profession. She has published much of her work on her blog called [Social Work Futures](#) which is followed by people in more than 40 countries, is currently preparing a book proposal on this same topic, and has become a [Research Fellow at the Institute for the Future](#) in Palo Alto, CA.

This 18-credit learning experience includes focus on technological change, climate change, geo-political shifts and such topics as the future of work, food, learning and more. Foresight is an emerging interdisciplinary social science comprised of psychology, sociology, anthropology and social work, the arts, political science, business, technological studies, urban studies, public administration, engineering and technology sciences, economics, and other geo-political focal areas (to name a few). Futures thinking and foresight practice reflect a collection of applied skills and tools related to a specific type of anticipatory thinking, applied ethics in a futures context and related change management / navigation skills. It is also about increasing proficiency in building collective intelligence, imagination, agency and

agility in individuals, groups, organizations and civic collectives with regard to self-determination and democratically anchored futures planning. Interdisciplinary elective coursework will allow students to personalize from among a list of future forward courses that best meet their professional goals and their intended future focus.

The certificate will include a deep exploration of settings and methods where foresight is currently being practiced in both the public and private sectors, a review of foresight research and methods and profiles of futurists who lead these processes. With a special focus on leading efforts to build foresightfulness within communities and / or organizations through trend mapping, power analysis, goal setting in a "VUCA" practice environment (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity), students will learn the fundamentals of engaging individuals, groups and organizations in a positive experience of navigating futures conceptualization and planning. Issues of equity and strategies to democratize co-creation of shared futures, acknowledge / address bias and patterns of historical bias will be prioritized. A concluding integration course will provide a culminating experience to engage in shared learning and cross-disciplinary review of foresight projects, as well as creation of a professional foresight portfolio useful to those seeking to enhance their career readiness in this area.

Evidence of Need

The current era reflects immense turbulence and change. Futures and foresight practice is an applied style of planning, useful in both the public and private sector, which prepares individuals to be effective at navigating change in innovative and future-facing ways. Current "future of work" predictions call for more, not less, turbulence and change in the workplace. The ability to plan effectively, navigate change with focus, and anticipate what trends will influence the future of modern life are sought after work skills. The PSU Futures Collaboratory has been in action for 1.5 years, and has attracted attention from students in many disciplines interested in adding these skills to their learning experiences. Dr. Nissen has had more than 200 conversations with interested students across campus as she has done guest lecturing on futures issues in the last 2 years - all interested in getting involved with the certificate. Dr. Nissen has had conversations with over 20 community partners (private and public sector) who have expressed interest in the certificate when it is available. This is a growing field of practice internationally and nationally, but we have no current competition for this specific type of educational program in Oregon.

Course of Study

Core (10 credits):

- IST 520 Introduction to Foresight and Futures Practice (4 credits)
- IST 521 Applying Foresight Frameworks and Building Futures Practice (4 credits)
- IST 522 Integrative Futures Practice (2 credits)

Electives (8 credits):

Students will then select a minimum of 8 credits from this list of electives:

- PA 513: Administrative Ethics and Values (3)
- PA 514: Global Leadership and Management (3)
- PA 516: Current Issues in Public Management (3)
- PA 536: Strategic Planning (3)
- PA 543: Creating Collaborative Communities (3)
- PA 598: Value-Based Management (3)
- USP 560: Climate Resiliency Planning (3)
- SW 510: Futures Thinking and Foresight Practice for Equity, Well-Being and Community Flourishing
- Econ 543: Global Environmental Economics (4)
- Mgmt 521: Design Thinking for. Social Innovation (4)
- Mgmt 522: Money Matters for Social Innovation (4)
- Mgmt 523: Storytelling and impact measurement for social innovation (4)
- Mgmt 518: Digital transformation of business (4)

Minimum credits: 18 hours