

AY26 Recommended Catalog Changes: Co-terminal/AMP/"Plus One"

Motivation

- We need to increase accelerated master's degree enrollment to **increase our graduate enrollments**, particularly of domestic students. "Plus one" programs are known to be a widespread mechanism for increasing graduate enrollments, particularly in times of economic distress and poor job markets.
- The **Provost** wishes to simplify our overall accelerated master's degree program. She also wishes us to move toward only double-counting graduate credits, not undergraduate credits in accelerated master's programs, although this will need to be facilitated over time, as many graduate degrees permit and motivate the counting of undergraduate credits toward graduate degrees.
- The **financial implications** of our current co-terminal program are problematic – we are losing money on our undergraduate enrollments and thereby exacerbating this problem by allowing them to continue onto graduate school with the same financial terms. That said, if we completely eliminate financial advantages associated with co-terminal / accelerated master's degrees, we will go from large, money losing enrollments to simply no enrollments. We must strike a balance, ensuring we employ some, reasonable financial incentives that attract undergrad students to our accelerated master's, while ensuring the overall program parameters are fiscally sustainable.
- The existing co-terminal program places **heavy administrative burden** on the financial aid/fiscal services and faculty/professional advisors, as we must carefully specify which credits are satisfying the undergrad vs grad degree, insuring compliance with federal financial aid rules, while maximizing financial benefit to students. This, at a time when all of our institutional support offices are strained by insufficient human capital.
- As written, while the catalog technically enables existing undergrads to participate in the accelerated master's program (AMP), the catalog's more general description makes **the catalog description makes it sound like AMP is limited to recent graduates** (within three years of degree conferral). The catalog appears to contradict itself regarding who can participate in AMP.
- The **AMP program does not enable the same financial benefits as the co-terminal program**, so undergrad students, while allowed to enroll in AMP, are not financially incentivized to do so.
- The **co-terminal program hurts our four-year graduation rates**, given the requirement that the undergrad and grad degrees are conferred concurrently at the five-year point. This then **impacts many of our program rankings**, where four-year graduation rate is an included metric.

Recommended Policy & Catalog Changes

- **Remove the co-terminal program**¹. This change would be implemented through catalog revisions that retire the co-terminal designation while preserving, where appropriate, existing residency and credit-sharing constructs under the Accelerated Master's Program (AMP)
- **Keep the AMP**², **implementing it as our “plus one” program.**
- Change the catalog wording regarding AMP – specifically its most basic description that begins with 'Alumni who wish to pursue an Illinois Tech master's degree after attaining their Illinois Tech bachelor's degree (within three years of conferral) may apply to a master's degree with advanced standing.' It is not clear to undergrads they can do it in a “plus one” manner and that they should plan/apply for it during their undergrad degree.” Change it to (changes highlighted): “**The Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) is available to both undergraduate students seeking a “plus one” program and Illinois Tech alumni (within three years of degree conferral).** Both populations may apply to the master's degree with advanced standing in accordance with published graduate program and transfer-credit policies. Through the Accelerated Master's Program (AMP-AS), students may share up to nine credit hours of applicable undergraduate coursework with their Illinois Tech master's degree, pending the approval of the graduate program.”
- Maintain, though replace references to ‘co-terminal’ with ‘Accelerated Master's Program (AMP)’: “All AMP degree requirements must be completed within six years of undergraduate matriculation (or seven if the undergraduate degree is a five-year program)...” The addition of the parenthetical note is to make room for programs that are inherently five-year programs to participate in the “plus one” AMP.
- Separate from catalog language, and subject to financial aid and budgetary approval, the following programmatic considerations are recommended: Create reciprocal graduate scholarships that undergrad students on scholarship can apply to and/or automatically receive, so that the fiscal benefits of doing a “plus one” remain, thereby motivating enrollment in AMP. This may be limited to demonstrated financial need if institutional fiscal implications necessitate it, however, we must remember that offering zero financial benefit for AMP enrollment will result in counterproductive decreases in program enrollment.
- Consider permitting AMP students to take graduate courses at the undergrad tuition rate, such as is the current benefit of the co-terminal program. Again, this policy may need to be limited to demonstrated financial need if institutional fiscal implications necessitate it, however, we must remember that offering zero financial benefit for AMP enrollment will result in counterproductive decreases in program enrollment.

¹ <https://catalog.iit.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-education/coterminal-degree-programs/>

² <https://www.iit.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/accelerated-masters-program>