PLANNING AND BUDGET

February 3, 2023

To: Sang-Hee Lee, Chair
   Riverside Division

From: Peter Atkinson, Chair
       Committee on Planning and Budget

RE: [Campus Review] (Proposed Degree Program) 3rd Round - Online Master of Business Administration (OMBA-SSGPDP)

The UCR Senate Planning and Budget Committee met on January 17, 2023 and discussed the responses to our earlier questions and concerns from November 9, 2022. We wish to emphasize that it is our sincere intention to provide our consent to the proposed online MBA as soon as possible, however we would be negligent in our responsibilities to provide our approval until we are comfortable with the responses to the issues we have raised.

Our ongoing concerns and questions are in blue type below each response below. Our original questions from 11/9/22 are in red type, and the School of Business response is in black type.

Q1: We request that Everspring staff not be allowed to use UCR e-mail addresses since it would lead to confusion of email recipients and, since they are not UCR employees, it would be inappropriate to do so.

We appreciate the concern being raised by the committee and believe that coordination with Everspring on messaging and communication protocols is essential. Everspring implementation team will develop the email messaging and communication protocols alongside UCR School of Business staff, so that UCR has oversight and input.

Everspring employees will self-identify as working for a third-party company on behalf of the University and will collaborate with our staff to custom configure a series of email messages and communication protocols, so that UCR has oversight and input of the formats to be used to support the engagement with prospective and existing students. During this collaborative process, Everspring will provide options for UCR of various ways their team can self-identify to prospective students, both verbally and in writing, that they are a third-party provider to the University. In Everspring experience, such disclosure can take many forms, from disclosure statements on the University’s websites to Everspring protocols for engaging by email, phone, and SMS/text. All of these will be potential options.

For OPM to use the corresponding university’s email address is the best practice in the industry for providing enrollment and retention services and this has never been an issue.
or concern at any other university that Everspring supports including other large public universities (e.g., University of Kansas, University of Pittsburgh, University of Tennessee, Knoxville) and several CSU campuses (CSU Chico, Long Beach, Monterey Bay). The main concern here is that if Everspring were to use a different email address, it would create confusion among our target audience. We also would like to add that the UCR Masters of Engineering Online (MSOL) has partnered with Pearson, Inc to conduct recruitment and marketing of the program to potential applicants. Pearson is responsible for advertising the program, prescreening, and encouraging applications for admission. Professor Kambiz Vafai, the director of the program, informed us that Pearson is using a UCR based email in all communications with potential applicants.

We have added this discussion to the proposal (Appendix 7: Summary of Important Contract’s Points).

In our discussion held on 1/17, the committee remained concerned that Evergreen staff would be using UCR e-mail address’ and we require clarification with the term “UCR based email” ascribed to Professor Vafai. What is the actual address to which he refers? Is it name@ucr.edu, or name@email.ucr.edu which is what faculty, staff and students use at UCR or is it some other form of UCR based email address that enables the recipient to clearly identify the sender as a non-UCR employee? We remain very concerned that Evergreen using UCR addresses will confuse the recipients and may also lead to an increase in the vulnerability of the UCR IT network. Given the proposed partnership between UCR and Evergreen we do not understand why Evergreen would see it as a disadvantage not to use a UCR address.

Q2: An explanation should be provided as to why the service fee to Everspring increases from $12.50 per credit hour for online students to $150 per unit for on campus students (Program Statement#1, p6). How was this calculated?

The course-taker fees substitute for the revenue-share and per-credit-fee ($12.5). This is not in addition to the revenue-share or per credit fee, so the actual payments per student to Everspring for course-takers (both in the On Campus-to-Online Scenario and the Online-to-On Campus Scenario) is about the same compared to the “Baseline Scenario” (and it was designed to be an easy way to equalize payments for course-takers, and, keep the tracking and reporting relatively simple).

For example (please refer to the financial working model file available here), in year 5 Everspring’s Revenue Share is $2.3m (see the “Financials Live Summary” tab) with an average of 320 active students (the $2.3m includes the upfront Service Fee). That is $7187/active student/year. If each student takes 3 courses in each term (for a total 12 courses/year - 48 credit hours per student/year), Everspring Revenue Share (+Service Fee) per credit hour is $149.7. Just about the same course-taker fees in both On Campus-to-Online Scenario and the Online-to-On Campus Scenario.

The committee remains concerned with these calculations. Simply put, what is the basis for the additional cost of an on-campus student taking this online course (or taking it in person if offered) rather than a student who is not on campus? How is this an additional cost for
Evergreen? From their calculation above the course will be available all three academic quarters plus the summer quarter. Is this correct?

Q6: Is there any reason why Everspring remains involved with a cohort of students once they have been admitted to the program? This seems to be the process followed by an SSGPDP in BCOE.

After admission, Everspring will support enrolled students with term-to-term registration, and all questions related to course enrollment and retention. Everspring will serve as a single-point-of contact for all student questions, then pass along specific items to the office of financial aid, or other school’s resources where necessary.

Student support after admission is a best practice for delivering outstanding student success and retention outcomes. For this reason, Everspring will deploy student success advisors to support the cohorts all the way through to graduation.

In the **MSOL** program, Pearson, Inc has been contracted to conduct marketing and recruitment of potential students and not be involved with support of enrolled students. Still, the payment to Pearson (as share of the revenue) is higher compared to Everspring share, and we get more services.

The committee remains concerned with this arrangement, specifically: 1) that Evergreen is the single point of contact throughout the time the students are enrolled in the program, and 2) that the Everspring student success advisors are thought to be better placed to advise the students (who are UCR students) rather than the faculty and staff of the School of Business. The committee believes that this proposed arrangement is not the best practice of these online programs, rather it advocates that Evergreen’s role is restricted to recruitment and placement and not to ongoing advice with Evergreen staff being the single point of contact. In our opinion this arrangement increases the risk that UCR’s reputation as an esteemed public university may be jeopardized.