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Drexel, UC Davis looking at graduate programs in finance

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Drexel University's Sacramento center plans to begin offering in the fall a master's degree in finance — a program that is growing in popularity.

University of California Davis also is considering a master's degree program in finance and anticipates launching a master's in accounting "within the next year or two because the demand for the degree is strong and placement prospects are excellent," said Brad Barber, a finance professor at the Graduate School of Management.

Drexel's Sacramento Center for

Graduate Studies, which opened three years ago, already offers eight graduate programs, ranging from master's degrees in public health and information systems to human resource development and library and information science.

A new program could help Drexel strengthen its presence here. The center is "still recruiting fewer students than we would like," said Tobey Oxholm, the center's dean. It's also offering more tuition assistance in this sour economy than it expected.

The finance degree will provide a deeper focus on finance than the master's in business administration degree offers.

"This is like a specialty degree inside an MBA," Oxholm said.

Drexel already offers the degree at its main campus in Philadelphia. But that campus doesn't have enough space to meet student demand, he said.

Drexel Sacramento will rely on its main campus to help spread the word internationally about the new offering and to offer support services to foreign students who come to study in Sacramento. With Sacramento's large Asian population and strong cultural support here, Oxholm figures students from Asia will feel comfortable in the capital.

Drexel's addition of the finance degree

"will certainly enhance Sacramento's presence internationally as a hub for higher education services in the state," said Brooks Ohlson, executive director of the Sacramento Regional Center for International Trade Development.

In Northern California, the University of California Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, University of San Francisco and St. Mary's have versions of a master's in finance, said Barber at UC Davis. The degree attracts many foreign students, particularly students from Asia.

But the economy could temper employers' demand for these graduates.

"While the demand for the degree seems to remain strong, student placement has been more challenging, particularly during the financial crisis," Barber said.

Drexel will start recruiting now to enroll students for the September start of the 20-month program.

Bank of America in San Francisco, Sacramento Municipal Utility District and Waste Connections Inc. have agreed to participate in the new program by sharing information with students about their financial structures.

Drexel also hopes to introduce a master's program for pathologists' assistants in Sacramento, said Gerald Soslau, senior associate dean of Drexel University's College of Medicine. That could come as early as September.

"There are no such programs available to students west of the Mississippi, and a program offered in Sacramento would help to fill vacancies for pathologist assistants at numerous hospitals and clinical laboratories," Soslau said.

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Tobey Oxholm
Dean, Drexel University's Sacramento Center for Graduate Studies