

New Programs Checklist

Six metrics you need to identify highest-potential new programs to drive growth

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Considering new programs?

These six metrics are crucial



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Hello, and thank you for visiting us here at UQ Solutions. My name is Seth Houston. I founded UQ Solutions to help colleges and universities make better decisions with better data. Our initial focus is on academic programs.

Many colleges and universities, across the county, have experienced declining enrollment in recent years—and the financial pressures that come with that. One reason for this is that **students are pursuing different opportunities than they were in past years**, and choosing different programs to get there. Too often, colleges and universities are struggling to adapt.

While several factors go into a college or university's ability to **deliver the best pathways to the opportunities that today's students are seeking**, getting the program mix right is one that is crucial. Elsewhere, we discuss how to manage your current programs to align with market opportunities. Here, our focus is on identifying the new programs to launch with the **lowest risk** and the **highest growth potential**. We have broken it down into six key metrics.

After sharing the metrics with you, we share some of the ways that we gather this data, and organize it for *your* institution in *your* markets, to make it fast and easy to identify high impact growth opportunities that may be right for you. *If you would like to find out more*, we would be more than happy to share with you the data we have on programs and program opportunities in your specific markets. You can click <u>here</u> to schedule a call.

The Six Metrics Are:



1. Market Growth

How well is the program performing in your **geographical market**? More specifically, what is the **annual unit growth** for this program in that market? Programs that are growing in your geographical market are more likely to grow at your institution.

To answer this question, we need to determine the **right geographical market** for your institution. We generally think about this as the area that encompasses competitor institutions that account for a significant majority—typically 60-80%—of the students who apply to your institution. As an additional factor, we want this market to be large enough to not be dominated by one or two big players. For many institutions, a "Neighboring States" market—consisting of the state where your institution is located and the adjacent states—is a good place to start. An analysis of your cross applications can reveal a more specific market definition.



To calculate annual unit growth, start with the number of students that completed this program, in this market, in the most recent year for which you have data. Then subtract the number of completions 3-5 years ago, and divide by the number of years. You might want to look at the percentage growth too.

The one problem with annual unit growth is that it's not scaled. It's hard to know if a given figure is high or low. Here at UQ, we developed a size-agnostic metric called **Scaled Unit Growth**, or S.U.G. If S.U.G. is above 1, it's a high growth program. If S.U.G. is between 0.2 and 1, it's moderate growth. And the inverse for decline. To calculate S.U.G., divide the program's annual unit growth by the total number of completions (for all programs) in the market (for the most recent year), and multiply by 4,000.

2. Market Segment Growth

The next question is: how well is it performing in your market segment? **Programs that are most likely to thrive at your institution will exhibit strong growth both in your geographical market and in your market segment.**

Segment, here, refers to—as a provost we work with recently put it—"schools like us that do what we do." Put another way, the segment should consist of schools with similar competitive positioning, serving similar students, and with similar resource capacities as yours.

How do we define an appropriate segment market? In general, we look for schools in the same **sector** (i.e. public, private, community), with similar **size** (i.e. enrollment), and with similar **selectivity** (i.e. admissions rate; standardized test scores are less useful now because less schools require and report them). If your school is specialized—in technology or the arts, for example—we take that into account as well. **We have found that the most useful segment markets include at least 60-80 institutions.** The segment definition will likely have a broader geographical span than your geographical market; it may even be national.

Here at UQ, we have developed a system for identifying institutions whose size and selectivity are within specified ranges of yours. We call this the **Automated Peer Group**, and it often serves as a good initial segment definition. Other groups of institutions, such as schools in your Carnegie classification, your US News and World Report ranking group, or an affinity group (such as women's colleges, HBCUs, or a faith-based consortium) may provide useful perspectives as well. As with geographical markets, an analysis of your cross applications can reveal more specific market definitions.

Once you have determined one or more appropriate segment markets, you want to look at the same metrics we looked at for the geographical market: annual unit growth, annual percentage growth, and **scaled unit growth**.

3. Competition

Are "schools like us" succeeding in this market? If so, which **market leaders** should be look to for best practices or inspiration?

Is the program's growth in your geographical market driven by 1-2 big players, or schools that are fundamentally unlike yours? If the program is overwhelmingly dominated by a flagship public institution, or a major online player, you will want to know that. The program may not be such a promising growth opportunity for your institution after all.

Next, look at your segment market. If the only schools that are succeeding with this program are fundamentally different from yours (technical or art schools, for example), or if only one or two are growing, that is cause for concern. **If a solid cohort of schools like yours are succeeding with this program, on the other hand, that increases your confidence that you can succeed too.**

If that is the case, you can identify 5-8 **market leaders**—schools like yours that are succeeding with the program—that you can look to for **best practices or** *inspiration*. How do these institutions structure their curricula? How do they market their programs? What kinds of partnerships do they have in place? These market leaders can serve as important guides as you consider, and then plan, the launch of your program.



4. Expected Program Size

If you launch this program, how big should you expect it to be at your institution? A clear understanding of expected program size will be crucial as you plan faculty needs and financial models for the program.



One place to start is **median program sizes** in your markets. Median program size in your geographical market is useful, but if your institution is small, you will need to adjust this figure downward. *The median program size for your segment will be a better guide.* As additional validation, you can consider the program sizes at specific peer institutions. Here at UQ, we calculate coefficients for your institution that we apply to median program sizes in your various markets to calculate the **expected size and growth** for any potential new program at your institution.

Once you have a good sense of the expected program size, you can better understand the impact of the program on your overall enrollment goals, the faculty resources needed to launch the program, and the financial impact on your institution.

5. Career Outcomes

Today's college students are increasingly focused on college majors, and non-Baccalaureate programs, that will prepare them for financially stable careers. *Understanding the career outcomes of a given program is an important aspect of assessing the program's attractiveness—and value—to potential students.*

Fortunately, there are several excellent data sources that can help answer this question.

- College Scorecard has data on first-year earnings and debt outcomes, by institution and by program. Because it includes data by institution, you can estimate earnings outcomes for a potential program at your institution based on your segment.
- The American Community Survey (ACS) has detailed data on major-to-career pathways, and can answer the question: what careers do graduates of a given program actually enter in your market? This data source also provides data on earnings, by major, over the course of graduates' entire careers.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides detail on jobs in your specific market. Of the jobs entered by graduates of a given program, which ones are growing, and which are declining? By how much? And how are salaries changing over time?

UQ Solutions provides data from all of these sources, customized for your markets and market segments. We also integrate the ACS and BLS data such that we can **estimate job growth, in your particular markets, by college major**. This helps understand how changes in the job market affect demand for academic programs.



6. Mission Alignment

The data we have discussed so far deals with market conditions. But you are considering a new program at **your institution**.

Does this potential new program align with your institution's **mission and values**? It may specifically align with, be neutral, or specifically detract from your mission and values. In the latter case, you probably don't want to offer it. Would adding this program fundamentally change your institution's character in a detrimental way?

Other factors to consider:

- What existing resources (faculty, facilities, courses) do you already have in place to support this program?
- Are there any partnerships, such as with local businesses or community colleges, that might support and/or benefit from this program?
- Are there any faculty (or non-faculty) champions who might support this program?
- Are there any **funders** who might want to support this program?

In addition, any new program proposal will need to carefully consider the **accreditation** requirements for launching the program, and develop a **financial model** that estimates the impact on your institution's overall operations and bottom line.



Sample Checklist

Most institutions develop their own systems to evaluate potential new programs. Here is one possible way to capture the six key metrics.

Key Metrics	Notes	Key Metrics	Notes
 Market Growth Market definition: Annual unit growth: Annual percentage growth:% Scaled unit growth: 		Career Outcomes • How much do students earn, in our segment, when they complete this program? \$	
 Market Segment Growth Market definition: Annual unit growth: Annual percentage growth:% Scaled unit growth: 			
 Program Size Median program size, geographical market: Median program size, segment market: Expected program size: 			
 Competition Are institutions like us succeeding with this program? yesno. If so, please identify 5-8 market leaders (schools like us that are succeeding with this program) to study for best practices: 			
		Additional Data Accreditation requirements Financial projections 	

How we help

Gathering all this data is hard. UQ makes it fast and easy. We bring together all the metrics you need, **customized** to your institution and your markets, focused on **key decisions**, with dashboards, tables, and reports that are **easy to use**—and available at a **low cost**. Our goal is to make the very best insights available to all institutions, regardless of size or budget.

We would love to share with you some of the data we have on programs and program opportunities for *your* institution in *your* specific markets. You can click on the link below to **schedule a call**.



As any administrator knows, timely and informed decisions are vital to success. UQ Solution's Market Analyzer is the most effective tool for synthesizing complex data. It has changed the way we think about the success of our current programs and the potential success of future ones. Highly recommended!



—**Dr. Evan Posey,** Provost, Luther Rice College & Seminary

Samples from UQ's Market Analyzer

focused on new program growth opportunities



This is just a sample

of the data we bring to help you identify the highest-potential, lowestrisk new programs for your institution, in your specific markets, to drive growth. We would be happy to share some of the data we have with you, for program opportunities for your institution in your markets, and to see how we can support your decision processes. Please click on the link below to schedule a call.

For more information:



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