EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF A COURSE IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM: EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: _ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE_________ **COLLEGE:**______BUSINESS______________

DEPARTMENT CONTACT: ___SUSAN MOELLER________________ **CONTACT PHONE:** ______487-3320_______

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1. Subject Code, Number, and Title:______FIN 450 Problems in Financial Management______
2. Credit Hours ____3________
3. Course Description: **Deals with application of financial management theory. Emphasis is placed on problem solving in differing economic and situational environments using various quantitative tools. Case analysis and class discussions are emphasized.**

4. This course is (check one):

   ☒ an existing course with no revisions (need not go through the input system)

   ☐ an existing course with revisions (attach this form to Request for Course Revision form)

   ☐ a new course (attach this form to Request for New Course form)

5. Check the General Education requirement this course is intended to meet. If the course is to be proposed for more than one requirement, submit a separate form for each one.

   ☐ **Effective Communication**

   ☐ **Quantitative Reasoning (*QR designation*)**

   ☒ **Writing Intensive (*WI designation*)**

   ☐ **Perspectives on a Diverse World**

   - ☐ Global Awareness
   - ☐ U.S. Diversity

   ☐ **Knowledge of the Disciplines**

   - ☐ Arts ☐ Humanities
   - ☐ Science ☐ Social Science

☐ **Learning Beyond the Classroom (*LBC designation*)**

- ☐ Self and Well Being
- ☐ Community Service, Citizenship, and Leadership
- ☐ Cultural and Academic Activities and Events
- ☐ Career and Professional Development
- ☐ International and Multicultural Experience
- ☐ Undergraduate Research

6. Rationale. Provide a concise, clear, jargon-free explanation of why this is a General Education course and how it fits into this specific area of the program. (The rationale should explain to students why they are taking the course. It should address both why it is part of the General Education program and why it fits into the particular category.) This rationale should appear on the general course syllabus provided here and should be included in specific course syllabi given to students. Note: *The Writing-Intensive courses are designed to provide students with the opportunity to continue to develop their writing through engagement with disciplinary strategies and conventions. Those proposing a WI course should explain in the rationale how and why the course is a writing-intensive course.*

   Intensive written communication skills are an integral component of this capstone course taken by students in the BBA-Finance program. One of the finance program goals is to have students demonstrate the communication skills necessary for successful entry into the finance profession. Our employers hire our students for financial analyst positions in banking, corporate finance, and investments. They strongly emphasize the importance of written and verbal communication skills for our students in order for them to be successful in these positions.

   The primary objective of this capstone course is to integrate the theoretical and practical finance knowledge learned in the required and elective finance courses by applying this knowledge to actual past business situations through the use of case analyses. Through case analysis students will demonstrate that they are competent in analyzing a firm's financial statements in differing economic and situational environments and presenting the results of that analysis and conclusions in written business reports. Students will write a number of reports and be given feedback on each one so as to learn how to continuously improve their writing skills and write better more concise and accurate reports. Students will be given guidance by the instructor prior to writing a case assignment on what analysis is expected. The syllabus provides students with an outline of the format and expectation for these case analyses.

7. Clearly and concisely explain how this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for the requirement checked in number five (all outcomes should be addressed). To do this, (a) list the General Education outcomes for the requirement and explain how the course meets each outcome; and (b) explain, in general terms, the method(s) of evaluation to be used in the course and how these methods assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this requirement.

   (a) How this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for Writing Intensive courses:

   - *Develop and employ successful, flexible writing and reading strategies that support sustained inquiry in a discipline.*

   Students enrolled in FIN 450 prepare business cases that present actual financial situations that pose debatable alternative courses of action that can be narrowed, but not totally resolved, by the usual techniques of financial analysis. These cases are selected by the instructor from a text such as *Case Problems in Finance* by Kester, Ruback and Tufano, McGraw-Hill/Irwin and are written by Harvard University Business School professors. Harvard cases are the most respected cases in the finance discipline and have been tested by many students and instructors for accuracy and importance to the discipline. All are designed to develop and sustain a student's inquiry into the finance discipline.

   A standard case includes most of the economic and financial information a student will need to solve a case. It is expected that a student will have access to a standard corporate finance textbook to review theories, equations, and calculations. Also if additional economic research is required for a case, students are given a review by the EMU business librarian at the beginning of the course to supplement their previous course work in the business research area. The core business area courses are required of all students to prepare them to do research on companies using publicly available financial data bases and other sources of financial information.

   Cases are prepared in executive summary form with a title page, statement of the problem section, an analysis of the problem section, and a recommendation. Students are asked to write succinctly so that this executive summary is no more than two pages. Students are required to do individual case analyses. This work is graded by the instructor and students are given verbal and written feedback on their work. Over the semester the cases increase in complexity and difficulty. The goal is to start the students off with an easier case analysis and move them to the more difficult ones over the course of the semester. For example, an initial case would cover a single investment decision while a later case would cover an acquisition and financing of a firm being purchased by a major corporation.

   Finally students will present and write a case analysis on a team with other students. The instructor assigns the students to the team. For this assignment research will be required beyond the financial information provided in the case. The paper must be a least ten pages long and a power point presentation using EXCEL spreadsheet analysis is required. Students are graded as a group on their report and presentation skills. Feedback is given to the students via class discussion and from the instructor when assigning the grade.

Also instructors who teach this course spend a lot of time in their office hours and via email helping students with their assignments. Every student and group usually comes once or twice a week to see their instructor or contacts him/her via email to get help with their thought processes for a case assignment. This course has a very interactive faculty and student component and also is the most important course for students when interviewing for jobs. The students learn how to answer employers' questions about financial analysis from this course in a manner that is recognized within the discipline as acceptable. Many alumni contact us after they are working as financial analysts to tell us that this course was one of the most important courses for them as it builds on all the other material taught in our other required finance courses.

- *Use writing strategies that achieve the purpose(s) for writing and address the expectations of audience(s) within a disciplinary context.*

The writing strategy used in this course is the executive summary of a business problem and the use of spreadsheet analyses to back up the recommendation to the business problem. Writing effective executive summaries of complex financial analyses of business situations is an important skill employed by finance professionals. The purpose of such writing is to succinctly communicate the relevant finance issues involved in a business problem to a broad audience of business professionals. The case analysis involves application of theoretical models with quantitative analysis presented in exhibits and tables referenced in the section on "Analysis of the Problem." The written report must be precise enough but free of jargon to be useful to a broad audience. The analysis of a number of recommendations is very important for a financial analyst as there is never one final solution to a problem. A student needs to be able to define the probability of different events occurring and then construct an analysis dependent on the probability analysis, and finally use scenario analysis to determine possible outcomes of a problem. This writing strategy is to outline for those making decisions different possible solutions and making a best guess as to which is the best one to choose. Many of our core business classes help a student with this assignment. Business statistics and business strategy are two of the courses students can apply when writing our financial analysis cases.

- *Formulate research questions and employ strategies for researching and responding to those questions.*

  Each case is chosen by the instructor to allow students to practice certain financial analyses techniques and apply certain financial theories when solving the cases. Students are given for each case a list of issues that need to be addressed in each case and a list of questions that need to be covered by the analysis. The other classes the students take as finance majors provide them with the background they need to solve the problem and answer the questions. This class allows them to integrate their previous work and apply it directly to real companies' problems. For example the decision to pay or not pay a dividend is a real problem faced by companies. There are many theories surrounding this issue and the students study these in our intermediate finance theory course. Then in our investment course the students learn how dividend policy affects the value of the firm and the many

forms a dividend can take and what happens to the value of a firm after such a decision is announced to the public. In the capstone course students will read an actual dividend policy case and use their previous learning to analyze the problem and recommend solutions.

In general, cases are chosen that confront students with the necessity of making a decision and supporting that recommendation when there are debatable alternative courses of action. Financial analysis techniques are applied in researching these business alternative courses. Students must first articulate the research issues in a case, find data, analyze the financial aspects of the case, evaluate alternative courses of action, and make a recommendation that is supported by their analysis. Through these cases they will learn to write effectively; that is, following a succinct format that presents a persuasive recommendation supported by sound economic and financial analysis.

- *Use discipline-specific genres to communicate information.*

  In addition to presenting individual written business reports and executive summaries with attached exhibits and tables following formats commonly used by finance professionals in corporations, banks, and investment firms, students make group presentations of the results of their case analysis to the class using PowerPoint presentations in a professional briefing to the audience. They will also write a group report of their results and must be able to answer questions about their work from the audience.

- *Understand conventions for communicating, disseminating, and interpreting information within a discipline.*

  This course builds on the written communication skills and conventions students developed in the required business core course MGMT 202 Business Communications. Proper format, grammar and spelling are all expected, as well as an impersonal, objective business tone in writing the results of analysis of the business cases. These written case summaries provide the basis for the oral group presentations, so effective outlining within the body of the written case report may be appropriate. Documentation of sources is critical and students learn this skill in MGMT 202. Students are coached on the dangers of plagiarism and directed to EMU's Student Judicial Services Web site that describes the importance of proper citations and avoidance of any unethical practices in the area of written reports. This course follows the College of Business' strong Ethos Statement (attached to this syllabus) that provides guidance for students in preparing written reports to be used in the finance and business professions. Students are encouraged to be critical of the accuracy of material derived from Internet Web sites that they choose to cite in their written reports.

- *Evaluation*
  The faculty member teaching this course will evaluate each student's written cases based on criteria and expectations established in the syllabus. Some faculty also give quizzes and exams. The grading scale is given on the syllabus.

(b). Methods of Evaluation

Instructors teaching this course evaluate students' work on an individual and group basis. As mentioned above, feedback is given to a student on the individual written work, along with verbal individual help from the instructor during office hours and via email. This process of evaluation allows students to strengthen their financial analysis writing skills over the course of the semester. They learn to follow the format for their write ups as required in the syllabus, they learn to make sure their work is grammatically and error free, and they learn how to describe in writing how they are doing calculations, what assumptions they are using, and what different recommendations they suggest. Individual work encompasses over 50 % of a student's grade. The group presentation and report is given a group grade and students also do individual homework assignments, quizzes, and tests.

This course is also used by the finance program to assess the students' knowledge of the finance discipline. The students are given a multiple choice test covering the material in all the required courses. The results are compared to the results of the same test given in the first major finance course the students take and are compared over time. In addition, a survey is given to the students, where the students discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the program and provide suggestions for improvement. A career survey is also given in this course which is used to build our program alumni database.

8. Attach a syllabus (1-inch margins and 10-12 pt. font). The syllabus must include the rationale from #6 above and clearly reflect the outcomes and methods of evaluation detailed in #7 above.

   SEE ATTACHED.

Please submit all materials in electronic form.

Action of the Department/College

1. Department AN EXISTING COURSE CONFIGURED TO MEET THE WRITING-INTENSIVE OUTCOMES. CHANGES ARE NOT SUFFICIENT TO REQUIRE PUTTING THEM THROUGH THE COLLEGE INPUT SYSTEM.

Vote of department faculty: For __**6**________ Against _______**0**___ Abstentions __________

_______________________________________ _______________
Department Head Date

2. College

_______________________________________ _______________
College Dean Date

Action of General Education Advisory Committee

Vote of General Education Committee: For ________ Against ________ Abstentions ________

____ _____________

Chairperson, General Education Advisory Committee Date

Approval

____ _____________

Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies and Curriculum Date