

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR NON-OPUS STUDENTS**

All master's students are admitted to a program that requires that they complete a group project to fulfill their "opus" requirement. The guidelines for a project are contained in the Master's Project Handbook, which is available on the web. Students wishing to complete a master's thesis or a master's practicum in place of a project may petition to do so any time after admission. The guidelines for petitioning to complete master's thesis or practicum are contained in the Master's Thesis Handbook or the Master's Practicum Handbook.

Beginning in fall 2006, master's students were admitted to a new program, including three core courses, 42 credit hours, and the possibility of a non-opus option. The non-opus option involves taking additional coursework in lieu of a project, thesis, or practicum. The faculty believes strongly that an opus is an important component of a graduate program, and students choosing a non-opus option should do so based on the value they expect such an educational experience to have for their future career. The petition to change from a project to a non-opus degree can only be submitted after the Master's Project presentations that are made during the first term of the students' residence. These project presentations are made on study day at the end of the fall semester. Between the beginning of the term and the study day, SNRE will have one or more meetings of all new master's students to discuss the Master's Project and its organization. All project and potential non-opus students must at least attend these meetings and the project presentations in order to gain a full understanding of what a project entails. In addition, these students should discuss their plans with their faculty advisors to obtain the advisors' perspective on the value of a project, practicum, thesis, or non-opus degree. After these discussions, if students intend to choose the non-opus plan for the master's degree, they can do so beginning after study days in the fall term. If they plan to do so, they should make such a decision early, as the Master's Project course in the winter term is required of all students continuing in the Master's Project.

It would be reasonable for students still uncertain about their options to begin to attend the Master's Project class and make a decision on their final opus plan after further exposure to a project during that course. However, students who know they wish to continue in a non-opus degree may submit paperwork beginning in mid-December. Students beginning the Master's Project course should realize that selection of a project and commitment to that work is important to all the students involved in the project. If a student has already signed an agreement to complete a project, they will not be allowed to change to a non-opus degree unless all members of their project group agree to the change.

The petition for a non-opus degree is available on the SNRE website. The petition requires the student to gain approval of his/her advisor, as well as the coordinator for the field of study. These two faculty members will review the courses listed on the student's petition as alternatives to the Master's Project, and insure that the coursework is significant and fulfills the requirements of that field of study. Once a petition is approved by these two individuals, it should be submitted to the Office of Academic Programs for final approval by the Associate Dean and implementation. Students selecting a non-opus option will then have these courses added to the requirements that must be completed in order for them to earn their degree.