

## The Professional Science Masters Degree

### Insights from the American University Experience

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## Why a PSM at American University

- ⇒ Long and strong tradition of professional masters level education
- ⇒ Access to key disciplines appropriate for a PSM
- ⇒ Experience with interdisciplinary work
- ⇒ Excellence in experiential education
- ⇒ Sloan grant availability
- ⇒ Faculty willing to take a leadership role
- ⇒ Large metropolitan area with diverse employer base

## Structure of the PSM degree

One degree; three areas of concentration

- ⇒ Applied Computing
- ⇒ Biotechnology
- ⇒ Environmental Science and Assessment

## PSM Experience

- ⇒ Modest but promising start; enrollment doubled between years 1 and 2
- ⇒ Numbers declined after year 2 and have remained at low levels since

## Reasons

- ⇒ Focus of recruitment
- ⇒ Breadth and depth of faculty commitment
- ⇒ Distinguishing the new degree from other, more established and successful degree offerings
- ⇒ Competition for marketing and financial aid resources
- ⇒ Employer interests and expectations

## Lessons

- ⇒ Clarity on the intellectual and disciplinary foundations of the degree
- ⇒ Importance of articulating the purpose, distinctiveness and value of the degree
- ⇒ Breadth and depth in Faculty leadership, supplemented with staff and money
- ⇒ Establishing true interdisciplinary programming, including faculty collaboration/oversight
- ⇒ Establishing the value proposition for the PSM relative to other degree offerings
- ⇒ Cultivating employers as both source and consumer of students