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## Irvine online degree program is UC's first

Students able to obtain master's in criminology starting next summer

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The University of California at Irvine is proposing an online master's degree that would be the first degree program taught over the Internet in the UC system.

The program in criminology, law and society was developed after UC began offering master's degrees that are aimed at working professionals and have a more practical curriculum than traditional master-of-advanced-study degrees.

"This is one way for us to reach a population that wouldn't ordinarily have the time or resources to come back and get this degree," said Henry Pontell, professor and chair of criminology, law and society.

The new master's degree, which is being offered by the School of Social Ecology, will cover issues of crime rates, white-collar and corporate crime, gangs, hate crimes and prisons as well as dispute settlement, law and social change and public policy.

The school currently offers an undergraduate degree in criminology. But those who want to continue must jump right to a Ph.D. because no master's is available.

Pontell said the faculty, which approved the program in May, was initially concerned that an online program would not meet the university's academic standards. But with some research, they learned the new technology could actually enhance teaching and learning, he said.

"We learned we could accomplish more in these courses than we could in a regular lecture course. We can require much more interaction," he said.

The coursework will be delivered in part by video streaming over the Internet, and students will be required to participate in class discussions through e-mail and discussion boards.

The program, which would start next summer, must still gain final approval from the UC Office of the President, but no opposition is expected.

While more than one-third of U.S. educational institutions offer an online degree program, this is the first at UC at any level. Most UC campuses offer some online courses, but the majority are through UC Extension.

UC spokesman Chuck McFadden said UC officials believe that using modern technology can be a way to expand the reach of UC.

"The Office of the President is interested in any kind of mechanism that will deliver education to people," he said. The program was developed with a \$10,000 grant from the president's office.

Students — who can be residing anywhere in the world — will participate in a weeklong orientation or campus, where they will meet faculty and fellow students before beginning the two-year program.

About 45 students are expected to enroll in the first class.

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