Proposal to Offer an Automatic Masters Degree (MA in Business)  
To the Jones School’s PhD in Business Program

The Jones Graduate School’s proposal to start a PhD program in Management was approved by Faculty Senate on September 26, 2007. The program was renamed PhD in Business in Summer 2009 after the school changed its name to the Jones Graduate School of Business. The program enrolled its first students (four, in Marketing) in Fall 2009. The program is preparing to ramp-up, with the expectation of enrolling six more students (two in Marketing, four in Finance) in Fall 2010 and as many as ten students per year in steady state.

The PhD in Business program does not currently have an option for students to earn an automatic masters degree. The School seeks to offer this option. Specifically, the School requests to award an automatic MA in Business to doctoral students after they achieve candidacy. Students achieve candidacy in the program after they complete their required coursework and pass a comprehensive exam, normally at the end of their second year or in their third year in the program. The School does not currently offer an MA in Business. If approved, the School will not admit students directly into a program of study which leads to an MA in Business. The only way that the degree can be earned is by achieving candidacy in the PhD program.

The rationale for the proposal is to provide an additional option and greater flexibility for students by allowing them to earn a degree at approximately the half-way point of what is normally a four to five year program of study. Some students who ultimately complete the PhD program may value the opportunity to earn an additional degree. Other students may learn, after completing their coursework, that a research career is not well-suited to them, and may find that earning an MA degree is a convenient way to exit the program. Since the School will not offer any other program that leads to the MA degree and the perceived value of an MA in the marketplace is quite different than an MBA or an MS in a functional area, there is little concern that students may “game the system” to earn a free Master’s degree. Many departments at Rice and many business schools across the country (e.g., Columbia, Cornell, Penn, Yale) already offer such an option for their students.

This proposal was unanimously approved by the faculty on the Jones School’s PhD Committee and unanimously approved by faculty at the Jones School faculty meeting on November 18, 2009.