Can You Major In Marijuana?

Schools around the country are creating courses and degree programs to meet the growing need for experts in the marijuana industry.

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A small, public school in the upper peninsula of Michigan is among the first in the nation to offer a degree program in cannabis chemistry, as well as a business degree focused on preparing graduates for success in the marijuana market.

Lake Superior State University in Sault St. Marie began offering the degrees because of the expected large increase in cannabis jobs in Michigan over the next few years. Voters in the state approved legal, adult-use marijuana sales in December 2018. They are expected to begin in December 2019.

Benjamin Southwell, an assistant professor of bio-analytical chemistry at Lake Superior State University, told NBC: “It’s an industry that needs trained scientists, and we are well-equipped to do it. Our program is designed to walk the students through testing, and the chemistry behind what’s going on in the cannabis plant.”

It’s not the first cannabis-related degree program, as Northern Michigan University began in 2018 to offer a degree in “medical plant chemistry” that “ provides a foundation in chemistry and plant biology.” The program also offers a focus track on becoming an entrepreneur in the marijuana industry.

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The New Degree Programs Will Prepare Students For A Variety Of Cannabis Industry Jobs

The Lake Superior State University programs offer students the chance to specialize in both cannabis chemistry and cannabis business.

The school advertises the chemistry program as the first in the United States to focus on the "quantitative analysis of cannabis related compounds and contaminants including THC, CBD, terpenes, etc."

The school lists a number of careers that the degree prepares students to work in, including Cannabis Extraction Manager/Technician, Formulation/Process Development Scientist, Pharmaceutical Chemist, Research/Process Development Scientist and Toxicology/Risk Assessment Scientist.

The Bachelors of Science in Cannabis Business has a curriculum designed to produce managers, supervisors and business development leaders in the cannabis industry. The program takes business management principles and applies them to specifics of the cannabis industry and cannabis operations.

Additionally, the school is going through the state and the DEA to ensure that it can legally have products that students can train with, according to the report from NBC.

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Other Cannabis-Related College Courses Have Started In Many Places

Other cannabis-related programs have started in various parts of the country. For example, the University of Denver offers a

course on the business of marijuana. Stockton University in New Jersey offers a minor in cannabis studies. The University of California-Davis offers a course on the physiology of cannabis.

And, with Lake Superior State University and Northern Michigan University both trying to get ahead of the jobs trend expected to happen because of legal cannabis in Michigan, students can see the advantage the programs provide.

“It’s just awesome to be able to go into some sort of innovative field rather than getting stuck in a field that’s already saturated,” Aleister Pether, a student in the Lake Superior State University business program, told NBC.

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