Davis Division Academic Senate

Request for Consultation Responses

Revised Proposal: CA&ES Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Major

December 16, 2010

A revised proposal submitted by the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences requesting approval of a Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Major. The proposal was first reviewed in Spring 2010. The update was provided in response to feedback received during the first review.
Dear Professor Powell,

The L&S Executive Committee has discussed the proposal to establish a new major in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems (SAFS) in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and has the following comments:

- The minimum number of units required for the new major is rather large, ranging from a low of 135 to a high of 145 for the various tracks (exclusive of the English Composition Requirement). In addition, the implementation of the new General Education requirement and the unstated prerequisites to some of the required L&S courses could raise the number of encumbered units for a student to as much as 200 or more. Can students reasonably be expected to complete this major in four years, even with adequate advising? Time to degree is an important issue for the system and the campus, so we urge caution when considering adopting new majors which appear likely to extend students’ undergraduate careers beyond four years.

- There are a number of lower division courses offered by the College of Biological Sciences and College of Letters & Science Colleges that are required by the new major, but which are already heavily impacted in terms of enrollment demand. Though consultation with affected CA&ES departments is mentioned, there is no evidence that similar consultation has occurred with the department chairs outside of CA&ES regarding the possible effect of increased enrollment on those courses. There are at least nine different L&S departments affected. Moreover, the absence of any projections as to the number of students expected to enter the new major makes it difficult to estimate the potential impact on the required non-CA&ES course offerings.

- Many of the proposed major’s upper division courses offered by L&S departments have prerequisites not accounted for in the lower level requirements. To the degree that students are either required or elect to take those courses having “hidden prerequisites,” the number of units necessary to complete the major program increases above the stated minimum.

- Though the major is described as being individually tailored and experiential, the organizational structure is rather complicated and concern was expressed as to whether it will prove workable. Sponsorship by a multiple, rotating set of departments is unusual and raises questions about how such a structure might affect the continuity and quality of both the operational oversight and the academic advising that will be so important to the new program. To what extent will this structure foster, or hinder, the long-term investment of the faculty of the multiple sponsoring units in the shared SAFS major? Will the Master Advisor change as overall responsibility for the major shifts to the next department? Staff advisors exercise the majority of their responsibilities under the direction of and with delegated authority from the department faculty. Yet, in this case, the Advising Associate is to be located in the Agricultural Sustainability Institute instead of an academic department. Is that the best long-term arrangement for the students, the faculty and, indeed, the Advising Associate?

Sincerely,

Patricia C. Boeshaar, Chair
Executive Committee
College of Letters and Science
No response at this time.
No response at this time.
Elections, Rules & Jurisdiction

December 16, 2010 3:49 PM

CERJ has reviewed the revised proposal for a major in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems. The two objections which CERJ had raised to the earlier proposal have been met by the new proposal.

One objection was that the major was to be housed in the Agricultural Sustainability Institute, which is not a department. It is now proposed to be housed in Human and Community Development for three years, with the host department being rotated every three years.

The second objection was that the Institute's Director cannot be required to provide "formal input" to the major's faculty personnel actions. This provision has been removed from the proposal.

CERJ believes that the faculties from the hosting departments and not only their chairs should vote to approve the major.

There are a number of matters of policy that are not strictly with CERJ's purview upon which CERJ wishes to comment.

1. CERJ believes that rotation of the major through departments would be unwise. There is much potential for confusion, and making the transition might involve extra work that would not be necessary if the major had a stable host. In the long run, majors not established within a single department do not have the faculty support necessary to function as well as departmentally-based majors.

2. CERJ believes that the involvement of so many departmental chairs makes this major less appealing and more political.

3. Rotating master advisers every three years also would not be productive, efficient, or wise.

4. The master adviser should be someone who has been teaching at UCD for several years to provide the knowledge and stability required for this major to be successful. CERJ believes that this person should be teaching in the proposed major.

5. Having one advising professor per student nominated by the student is putting the advising burden on the student. Each student should have an adviser assigned to, not nominated by, the student. Which faculty are obligated to advise? Are these prearranged within each department? More details are needed.

6. The capstone course is not well-defined.

7. The internship program is ill-defined and will require more management and staff time than allowed in the current proposal. Twelve units of internship is highly desirable, but the internship program will be a failure unless managed correctly. If the major attracts students, a full-time knowledgeable staff person will be required to manage the internship program to ensure quality and coordination.

8. The three proposed tracks are sufficiently different to be considered different majors. Potential solutions include breaking this major into three separate majors such that each major have a department home and change this college major into three departmental majors or revise the curriculum. Tracks within a major should provide the student with some flexibility to switch from one track to the other during the first or second year. A student would be at a disadvantage trying to switch between tracks because the preparatory subjects required in the different tracks are not sufficiently similar.

9. CERJ suggests for the General Catalog copy the substitution of the phrase "major in the Human and Community Development department" for "major in Human and Community Development," which could mislead students.
Planning & Budget

April 1, 2011 2:00 PM

CPB has reviewed the revised proposal (3/15/2011) for the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems major. The new proposal addresses all of our concerns and CPB now approves the major.
The Undergraduate Council (UGC) has reviewed and discussed the proposal from the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences to create a new major in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems. After careful review of the response to the request for clarification previously sent to the College on November 23, 2010, the Undergraduate Council approves the proposal.

The Council had two comments as to the execution of the major. These do not need to be addressed before implementing the major, but we urge the SAFS faculty to consider these as they move the major forward.

   Regarding the requirement for off-campus internships, UGC has concern that the response did not directly address the question of availability relative to the need, but can surmise the need will not exceed the number of available internships. The College is urged to monitor this and adjust to expand the requirement to include on-campus internships if the need arises.

   • UGC encourages an expansion of the required BIS coursework to include BIS2B and BIS2C in addition to BIS2A. The Council’s opinion is that all biologists should have the broad basis provided by the full BIS series.

Undergraduate Council looks forward to the establishment of this new major for the Davis Division.