

**Advice on the Proposed Major in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems**  
**Committee on Elections, Rules and Jurisdiction**  
**February 4, 2010**

The Davis Division Committee on Elections, Rules and Jurisdiction (CERJ) has reviewed a proposal from a committee in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CA&ES) to establish a new interdisciplinary major in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems. This proposal was initiated by the Executive Committee of CA&ES.

CERJ finds two objectionable features of the proposal. The first concerns the academic unit which would offer the program.

“The committee recommends the following administrative personnel:

- a. Master Advisor, who is a faculty member of the Academic Senate to champion the major. (ASI Director, Tom Tomich)
- b. Advising Associate/Internship Coordinator, who will have an appointment in ASI and whose responsibilities include academic advising and coordinating student internships.
- c. Steering Committee, whose responsibilities include oversight of the SAFS major, and is composed of the ASI Director, Master Advisor, Advising Associate, Peer Advisor, three Faculty Representatives (presumably chairs or vice-chairs) with at least one each from a natural science and a social science focused department, and a Student Representative” (page 5).

“Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems is an interdisciplinary major in the Agricultural Sustainability Institute.” (Appendix B, proposed General Catalog copy).

Standing Order of the Regents 105.2(B) reads in part, “The Academic Senate shall authorize and supervise all courses and curricula offered under the sole or joint jurisdiction of the departments, colleges, schools, graduate divisions, or other University academic agencies approved by the Board . . . .”

According to SOR 105.2(B), curricula are to be offered by “academic agencies approved by the Board” of Regents. The proposal would have the program offered under the jurisdiction of an “institute” which, to our knowledge, has no such academic standing. CERJ advises that interdisciplinary majors within a college must either be based in a department or the college.

The proposed Steering Committee would provide “oversight of the SAFS major.” CERJ advises that oversight is tantamount to supervision, and supervision must be the exclusive function of the

Committee in Charge, which consists entirely of Senate members, in conformity to SOR 105.2(b).

There is no prohibition for a curricular program to be afforded space or staff assistance by a non-Senate entity, but the proposal would reach beyond such material assistance to make the major, in effect, an arm of the Agricultural Sustainability Institute.

The second problem concerns the faculty personnel process.

“Recognition/incentive for faculty involvement will be necessary to elicit long-term engagement. CAES and ASI need to work in concert to provide this incentive. One way for this recognition to be achieved is to have the ASI Director contribute formal input into the merit and promotion actions of the teaching faculty involved with the SAFS major” (page 5).

It is unclear what “formal input” to personnel actions of the teaching faculty might be. Clearly, the ASI Director would have voting rights only for a member of his or her own department. Academic Senate Bylaw 55 confers the right to vote on “certain personnel actions” to members of the department of the faculty member to whom the action applies.

Section 220 of the Academic Personnel Manual makes clear that each department determines its own voting procedures. “Within the limits of Bylaw 55, departments must decide upon their own voting procedures and submit those procedures in writing, through their dean, to the Oversight Subcommittee of the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) for review.” Thus, it would be up to the department of any faculty member who teaches in the proposed major to solicit formal input from the ASI Director with respect to any personnel action for that faculty member. A requirement for “formal input” for any department member may not be imposed by an extra-departmental entity.

There is one further technical point worth comment. In Exhibit A of APM 220-25, there is a reference to “Consultation with Affected Parties to Form Complete Proposal.” This appears to be a reference to the first step in the process, in which, “The initiator shall consult with review committees (Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council, Vice Provost--Undergraduate Studies or Dean—Graduate Studies, school or college), and with the dean(s) of affected schools or colleges for input and assistance in proposal preparation and requirements.” Further, APM 220-25 states that in the process of the establishment of new major, a vote shall be taken of the Senate members of the “affected unit” if it is below the college level. As the major would interdisciplinary, it appears that there is no “affected unit.”