

CERJ Advice on Approval of Minor Programs
November 24, 2010

CERJ has been asked by the Chair of the Faculty of the College of Letters and Science for advice concerning procedures for the approval of new minor programs offered by undergraduate colleges. The following advice should be taken to apply not only to the colleges, but also to any professional school which offers a minor. Any mention of colleges should be taken to apply to professional schools.

CERJ advises that any new minor program on the Davis campus must be approved by the Undergraduate Council of the Davis Division. Therefore, final approval may not be given by the Faculty of the college proposing to offer the minor.

This advice is based on Davis Division Bylaw 121(B)(2), which states as one of the duties of the Undergraduate Council: "Consistent with the rights of the Faculties under the Standing Orders of the Regents (105.2.b), to approve or decline to approve the establishment and discontinuation of undergraduate programs." Standing Order of the Regents 105.2(b) confers the following right on the Faculties: "No change in the curriculum of a college or professional school shall be made by the Academic Senate until such change shall have been submitted to the formal consideration of the faculty concerned." So, the Undergraduate Council is to approve or disapprove the establishment of undergraduate programs only after formal consideration by the Faculty of the college proposing it.

It is the view of CERJ that the phrase "undergraduate program" includes minor programs as well as major programs. There is no qualification in DDB 121(B)(2) which restricts approval authority to major programs.

It is true that it has been standard practice for colleges to approve new minors without Divisional approval. On the other hand, at least one college, the College of Engineering, has been submitting its proposals for new minors to the Undergraduate Council.

The primary argument against Divisional approval authority is based on a reading of Policy and Procedures Manual 200-25. This document describes the steps needed to establish "academic degree programs," which are defined as sequences of courses leading to a degree. But minors do not in fact lead to degrees, and so PPM 200-25 apparently does not apply to the approval of new minors.

CERJ agrees that PPM 200-25 does not contain a basis for any claim of authority by the Division. However, it finds that there is a basis for a claim of Divisional authority in DDB 121(B)(2).

A further argument is that a college-based approval process seems consistent with the principles of faculty governance and responsibility for the curriculum, since it the approving body is the college Executive Committee. CERJ grants that approval by the college Faculty is consistent with the principles of faculty governance and responsibility for the curriculum. Indeed, as noted above, SOR 105.2(b) requires that the faculty of the college be formally consulted. However, this right does not vest the sole power of approval at the college level. Moreover, the Davis Division, as well as a college Faculty, is a governing body of the faculty and is also responsible for the curriculum.

If the Faculty of the College of Letters and Science wishes to retain its traditional autonomy in the approval of new minor programs, CERJ suggests the the Faculty bring to the Representative Assembly a Bylaws amendment adding the word 'major' before 'programs' in DDB 121(B)(2).

If the Davis Division ultimately retains the authority CERJ opines that it has, it should seek to amend PPM 200-25 appropriately, so that it explicitly states that its procedures apply to minor programs.