

February 23, 2006

MEMORANDUM

To: Jon Sticklen
Chair, Executive Committee of Academic Council

From: Ralph Putnam
Chair, University Committee on Academic Policy

Subject: Proposal to establish undergraduate academic minors

On February 16, 2006, UCAP considered the establishment of undergraduate minors, drawing on background information provided by the University Curriculum Committee and University Curriculum and Catalog. UCAP supports the establishment of academic undergraduate minors with the following proposal to Academic Council, to be reviewed by the Executive Committee of Academic Council (ECAC).

Proposal

Establish an undergraduate academic minor described as “a secondary field of study.” A minor should constitute a coherent set of courses that together provide students with an understanding of the major concepts of the field of inquiry represented by the minor.

1. Academic units recommend whether to offer a minor.
2. Academic units recommend whether to specify admission requirements for the minor.
3. The specific requirements for a minor are recommended by the offering unit.
 - a. A minor should provide students with an introduction to the breadth of the field of inquiry as well as some limited in-depth knowledge.
 - b. A minor should require no less than 1/3 the number of credits required for the major in the same field and no more than 2/3 the number of credits required for the major.
 - c. Students completing minors should not be required to complete Tier II writing courses in the minor field.
 - d. Students completing a minor in a college other than the college offering their primary major should not be required to complete college-level requirements in the minor field.
4. An academic unit offering a major may choose to prohibit particular courses being counted as credits toward a minor.

Background and Rationale

The establishment of undergraduate minors has been discussed by a number of groups over the past two academic years. Students have requested during the 2003-04 and 2004-05 academic years that MSU establish minors to allow them to demonstrate competence in a secondary field

of study beyond the academic major. The University Curriculum Committee prepared background materials for consideration by UCAP, as did the office of University Curriculum and Catalog. There appears to be widespread support among students and faculty for establishing minors, with arguments including:

1. With the exception of teaching minors for students preparing for teacher certification, MSU has not offered minors.
2. MSU is the only Big-10 institution that does not offer minors.
3. MSU offers a range of *specializations*, defined as “a set of thematically related and often interdisciplinary courses, separate from the major.” Academic minors would provide a transcriptable focus in a single discipline that would complement majors and interdisciplinary specializations.
4. The availability of minors will enhance curricular flexibility, enabling students to explore another field of study and demonstrate disciplinary-based preparedness beyond the major.

Additional Considerations

1. If the establishment of minors is approved, there are a few specializations that should be reviewed by the offering units to determine whether they would be more appropriately defined as minors.
2. It is not possible to give enrollment priority electronically according to minor, specialization, option, etc. The only way the Student Information System (SIS) can monitor electronically is by class level, department, college, or major.

Attachments

Big Ten Schools and Minors
Academic Program Terminology Chart

CC: Julie Harrison
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