

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

February 7, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: June Youatt, Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education and
Dean of Undergraduate Studies

FROM: Linda O. Stanford, Assistant Provost for Academic Services and
University Registrar

RE: Proposal to Establish an Undergraduate Minor

I write to request that the University Committee on Academic Policy consider the possibility of offering academic minors. Undergraduate students have requested that academic minors be offered at MSU.

Historically, MSU has had a commitment to the existence of specializations, many of which are interdisciplinary. However, with the exception of teaching minors for students preparing for teacher certification, MSU has not offered minors.

Subcommittee D, the policy committee of the University Committee on Curriculum, prepared a proposed revision to the "Academic Program Terminology" sheet to include minors and offers the "Things to Consider" sheet as background information for UCAP to use in its deliberations.

I also attach an earlier memorandum I sent to Provost Wilcox on behalf of the UCC. It contains additional background information.

Please let me know if you have any questions.



UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM and CATALOG

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Attachments:

Academic Program Terminology Chart, revised 2/06
Things to Consider Chart, revised 2/06
Memorandum to Provost Wilcox dated 9/22/05
Big Ten Schools and Minors
Link to Academic Specializations - <http://www.reg.msu.edu/ucc/specializations.asp>

cc: Michael Schechter, Chairperson, University Committee on Curriculum
Joy Speas, University Curriculum Administrator

MINORS

College	Administered by	Credit Range	Interdisciplinary or single-subject
University of Chicago	College/department	15-24	single subject
University of Illinois	College/department	16-21	have both/mostly single-subject
University of Illinois- Chicago	College/department	19-21	single subject
Indiana University	College/department	15-21	have both/mostly single-subject
University of Iowa	College/department	15	single subject
University of Michigan	College/department	15-18	single subject
Michigan State University	College/department	15-25	single subject disciplinary teaching minor
University of Minnesota	College/department	14-25	single subject
Northwestern University	College/department	6-8 units (quarter system)	have both/mostly single-subject
Ohio State University	College/department	20-25 (quarter credits)	single subject
Pennsylvania State University	College/department	18-21	single subject
Purdue University	College/department	15-31	have both/mostly single-subject
University of Wisconsin			

Academic Program Terminology

This terminology is used to describe majors, minors, options, specializations, teacher certification and sub-categories within them as noted.

Name	Definition	Transcriptable (listed on student's transcript)	Trackable in SIS (students can be located by program in the Student Information System)	Eligibility	Relationship to major	Requires separate approval/certification
MAJORS						
Major (Pending) (Field of Concentration) in James Madison College, Lyman-Briggs School, and Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Science, a major is known as a field of concentration.	A primary field of study named as a specific degree program.	Yes	Yes	Students who select and meet specific admission criteria for a field of study as a major preference.	N/A	N/A
Concentration	A set of disciplinary or interdisciplinary courses integral to the major.	No	Optional	Students enrolled in specific majors.	A subset of courses within the major.	Part of degree requirements. Final approval is integral to the degree certification process. The department and/or college must approve and inform the Office of the Registrar.
Cognate	A set of related disciplinary or interdisciplinary courses complementary to the major.	No	No	Students enrolled in specific majors.	Complementary to the major.	Part of degree requirements.
MINORS - OPTIONS - SPECIALIZATIONS						
Minor	A secondary field of study.	Yes	Yes	Students who select and meet specific admission criteria for a field of study as a secondary preference.	Coherent set of courses supplementary to the major.	Final approval is concurrent with the degree certification process.
Option	A discrete set of courses or other academic requirements complementary to the major.	Yes	Yes	Students enrolled in specific majors.	Optional courses complementary to the major.	Final approval is separate from or concurrent with the degree certification process. The department and/or college must approve and inform the Office of the Registrar.
Specialization	A set of thematically related and often interdisciplinary courses, separate from the major.	Yes	Yes	Usually any student.	A distinct entity from an academic major. Certain majors may be excluded because the content significantly overlaps.	Final approval is separate from the degree certification process. The department and/or college must approve and inform the Office of the Registrar.
TEACHER CERTIFICATION						
Area of Emphasis (Exclusively for Teacher Certification Programs)	A set of disciplinary or interdisciplinary courses.	Yes	Yes	Students enrolled in specific majors.	Integral to an academic major.	Part of degree requirements. Final approval is integral to the degree certification process. The department and/or college must approve and inform the Office of the Registrar.
Teaching Minor (Exclusively for Teacher Certification Programs)	A group of single subject or group subject courses required by the State of Michigan.	Yes	Yes	Students admitted to teacher certification programs.	Teaching Minors are available for elementary and/or secondary certification. Certain teaching minors are only available for specified majors.	Yes

Things to Consider – Academic Program Terminology

Discussion of the creation of academic minors needs to include a consideration of the impact on other academic program entities such as majors, specializations, cognates, etc. What follows are items to consider. Those items listed under “Minors” below are the kinds of issues to consider in the formulation of a “Minors” policy.

- **Coherence**
- **Access**
- **Double-counting vs. not double-counting**
 - **Credit ratio major/minor**

Specializations

- Generally open to all students.
- What about certain specializations restricted to certain students?
- Suggested credit range is 12-18, per guidelines.
- Actual credit range is 9 – 35.

Options

- Open to specified majors.
- Actual credit range is 16 – 27.

Majors

- Open to all students.
- Sometimes require a grade-point average.
- Sometimes require a performance/portfolio review.
- Credit range varies widely.
 - Some colleges allow double-counting of Integrative Studies requirements.
 - Engineering
 - Some colleges specify credit minima or ranges.
 - Arts and Letters
 - BA, BFA, BMus
 - Social Science
 - BA, BS

Minors

- Academic units recommend whether they wish to offer a minor.
- Academic units recommend whether there are admission requirements.
- If a unit chooses to offer a minor:
 - Students completing minors should not be required to complete Tier II courses in that field of inquiry as part of the requirements of the minor.
 - Students completing minors in a college outside of the college of their major should not be held for college-level requirements in their minor field.
- The specific requirements for the minor are recommended by the offering unit. These should be a coherent set of courses that together provide students with an understanding of the major concepts of the equivalent field of inquiry for which the minor exists.
 - Minors should provide students with an introduction to the breadth of the field of inquiry as well as some limited in-depth knowledge.
 - Minors should be no less than 1/3 the number of credits required of the major and no more than 2/3 the number of credits required of the major.
 - Some majors might choose not to allow some courses to count credits toward the minor.
- 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.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

September 22, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kim Wilcox, Provost

FROM: Linda O. Stanford, Assistant Provost for Academic Services

RE: Proposal to Establish an Undergraduate Academic Minor at Michigan State University

This proposal is sent to you, from University Curriculum and Catalog, for your review.

It is offered in response to recent interest expressed across campus in giving consideration to the establishment of an undergraduate academic minor. University Curriculum and Catalog was asked to provide the information academic governance would need to consider this proposal.

Proposal:

To establish an undergraduate academic minor described as "a field of secondary emphasis."

As a complement to a major, optimally it is recommended that the policy state the credit count for the minor as a minimum of 15 credits, with the usual range being between 15 to 25 credits, to allow for the variation in course credits.

Departments, schools, and colleges will decide if they want to offer minors and the specific credit requirement. The decision to create a minor will follow the same criteria used to establish academic majors and specializations.

The availability of this field of secondary emphasis will enhance curricular flexibility.

The relationship of the minor to a student's academic major, teaching minor, or specialization will rest with the unit offering the academic major.

Background:

Michigan State University has a long tradition of offering undergraduates an opportunity to engage in thematic and interdisciplinary study that is complementary to the academic major.

There are now almost four dozen specializations offered in a wide range of fields. A list is attached and a link is provided here:

<http://www.reg.msu.edu/ucc/specializations.asp>



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The definition of a specialization is: "A set of thematically related and often interdisciplinary courses, separate from the major." As this definition reveals, there is no provision for students to focus study in a discipline.

During 2003-4 and 2004-5, students have asked that academic minors be established at MSU to allow them to demonstrate competence in a secondary field of study beyond the academic major.

Relationship to the overall undergraduate curriculum:

The availability of minors will enable students to explore another field of study and to demonstrate disciplinary-based preparedness beyond the major.

Students who do not complete a specialization should be able to complete a minor within the overall credit-count for their major, easily.

Given the availability of electives and/or the ability to "double-count" courses that are integral to specializations, students who elect to complete a minor as well as a specialization may not need to exceed the overall credit-count for their major (e.g. 120 credits).

Minors at other Big 10 Institutions:

The attached chart reveals most other Big 10 Institutions offer minors. While some offer both interdisciplinary as well as single-subject minors, most offerings are single-subject focus.

By not offering minors, Michigan State University is clearly outside the norm.

Relationship of Minors and Specializations:

If the existence of minors is approved, there are a few specializations that would need to be reviewed by the units offering them and by the University Committee on Curriculum to determine if they are more appropriately described as minors.

Timeline:

If this proposal is approved by Academic Council during 2005-2006, units could propose specific minors in accordance with the usual curricular calendar.

Attachments (3): UCC Academic Specializations,
MSU Academic Program Terminology showing proposed
definition of an academic minor,
Big Ten Schools and Minors