

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

October 28, 2008

To: R. Sekhar Chivukula, Chair, UCAP
From: Linda Good, Chair, UCC
Re: Proposal #1 and the Relationship between Minors and Specializations.

UCAP considered the UCC Comprehensive Proposal #1 on September 18, 2008 and after discussion, in a memo on the same date, UCAP requested that "UCC provide clarification on the distinction to be drawn between a specialization and a minor before concluding deliberations on this matter."

While a vote on Proposal #1 is not dependent upon changing the definitions of a minor and/or a specialization, UCC, respectfully agreed to explore the request from UCAP.

UCC Full Committee met on September 25, UCC Subcommittee D (Our policy committee comprised of the subcommittee chairs) met via email from October 10-15, and UCC Full Committee met again on October 23rd to consider changing the definitions. In all discussions, there appeared to be no problem with the current definition of a minor as "a secondary field of study," or with the current definition of a specialization as "an interdisciplinary program of thematically related courses." In fact, our research on definitions of minors used at other institutions consistently refers to them as secondary fields of study. There was hesitancy on the part of the Full Committee to assign the word "disciplinary" to minors because the original intention of Proposal #1 was to allow departments greater freedom in developing, proposing, and offering minors. Some majors are more appropriately described as fields of study than as disciplines. For example, consider Composition and Music Theory, East Asian Languages and Cultures, and Environmental Biology/Microbiology.

At our October 23rd Full Committee meeting, UCC voted to reaffirm the current names and definitions of both specializations and minors, because the two definitions are significantly different. It is the responsibility of the UCC to vet programs as they are proposed by departments in accordance with the definitions. After careful consideration, the original definition of a specialization still holds, and an examination of the names of specializations indicates that they are interdisciplinary (e.g. "Asian Pacific American Studies," "Bioethics, Humanities & Society," etc.). As we learned in Spring 2008, during the discussions surrounding the UCC Comprehensive Proposals, there is a clear and consistent understanding on campus that specializations are interdisciplinary and that was the reason colleges emphatically recommended to the UCC, *not* to propose their elimination. *Therefore, I submit this explanation in fulfillment of the UCAP request for further clarification of the distinction between a minor and a specialization and urge UCAP to conclude deliberations on Proposal #1.*

Proposal #1, states, "Enable departments to offer a minor in a field of study where no major is offered and eliminate the requirement that the minor must carry the same field-of-study name as the major."

Further background on Proposal #1: Minors were officially established with an affirmative vote by Academic Council on April 25, 2006. After a year and a half of units proposing minors, academic units were expressing concern that it did not make sense for them to offer a minor in English when they would rather have a minor in Shakespearean Studies or Creative Writing. The current policy regarding minors only makes a minor in English possible because English is the name of the degree program major. In response to departmental requests, Proposal #1 was drafted to make the offering of minors more malleable for units.



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Additional Information Related to Minors

Minors require a minimum of 15 credits and at least 12 credits counted toward the requirements for a student's minor must not be used to fulfill the requirements for the student's major. Twelve credits must be unique to the student's major.

Students may not pursue a minor in the same field of study in which they are pursuing a major.

Specializations are developed using the guideline of 12 to 18 credits. Courses counted toward a specialization may overlap the requirements for a major.

cc: Dr. Linda O. Stanford, Associate Provost for Academic Services
Dr. Doug Estry, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of
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Sandra Walther, Office of Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education
Joy Speas, University Curriculum Administrator