

2-21-2008

## Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Thursday, February 21, 2008

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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### Recommended Citation

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee, "Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Thursday, February 21, 2008" (2008). *Academic Affairs Committee Minutes*. Paper 126.  
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AAC minutes 2/21/08

In attendance: Sharon Carnahan, Eric Zivot, Thom Moore, Shannon Mariotti, Ben Balak, Tina Bucci, Kristin Trucco, Yusheng Yao, Jenny Cavanaugh, Laurie Joyner, Allison Wallrapp

Minutes from previous week approved

Curriculum committee report: Chair of Curriculum Committee will be asked to join AAC for a discussion in the coming weeks.

Environmental studies: Change to major

Issues raised:

Was the change discussed divisionally?

Is it part of a national trend in environmental studies?

What is driving the change? Staffing issues?

Does it make environmental studies less competitive for grad school students?

Does it make the major too easy?

Lee Lines:

\* Rationale for course reduction: some of our best majors are double-majors; we are looking to provide more opportunities for students to be interdisciplinary and to encourage them to double-major.

\* Environmental studies is by nature interdisciplinary and many of our students are not interested in specializing in one of the two tracks; we've collapsed the different tracks into one tracks and have used it to define the major.

\* changes to senior capstone seminar

SC: How can a 2 hour course be a senior research seminar?

LL: We are not going to present any new content, no lecturing. But by making it a 2 hour seminar, it is clearly marked as something different; it will meet once a week and have a rigorous discussion where students have to think on their feet and apply what they have learned in the entire major. It is meant to be applied synthesis of what they have learned.

LL: Staffing issues are also a concern and a reason for dropping it down to 2 credits.

SC: We will need a new course proposal for the senior capstone before we approve the changes to the major.

SC: how many ENV studies majors are there?

LL: 35

LL: Re: senior capstone: It makes sense for us to have two people in the classroom all the time, given that the major is so interdisciplinary and given that it is difficult for one faculty member to cover all these different areas.

SC: Science classes? Does it make your majors less competitive to have less science?

LL: Katie Sutherland is going to teach the biosphere course and it is going to be redesigned as an introductory ecology course: it will stay within the ENV designation but it will be a more rigorous ENV science course. The biology in the major has changed to have more of an ecological focus, which is what our students need.

SC: Have these changes been discussed divisionally?

LL: Yes, extensively with biology.

LL: Other motivations for reducing course load requirements: We as faculty want to make sure that we also have time to integrate with other majors and support other minors. We want to have the time to be more interdisciplinary on campus too.

SM: How does this change fit into the national trend in environmental studies?

LL: We are not an environmental science major but an environmental studies program which tends to be broader and more interdisciplinary; most graduate students tend to go into policy or law programs. We have students who go into sustainable development programs, etc.

We are a stand-alone dept. and we emphasize sustainable development. The trend nation-wide is more focused on HOW we deliver the information than what we focus on: the trend is for more hands-on, field-oriented experiences for students – we've already been doing this for years and will only continue.

SC: Would it be considered a friendly amendment to add something to say that if you intend to go into graduate programs, you will want to supplement your courses with x, y, or z.

LL: Possibly, but that is also an advising issue.

SC: You want students to know that if they take these 10 courses and try to get into an environmental science program at Berkeley, they won't get in...

LL: Yes, but this is probably an advising issue.

JC: Can you put in a more general statement saying that the ES dept. encourages double-majoring and asks students to speak with their advisor ASAP if they plan on attending graduate school?

LL: Yes, a statement like that would be acceptable.

LL: I see us less as training students for a specific discipline than training students to go into a wide range of other fields.

SC: what we need from Lee:

- 1) Course proposal for the revised senior seminar
- 2) Some sort of statement about how the major encourages double-majoring

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SC: I wouldn't want to see something institutionalized that gave 2 professors full credit for team-teaching a course.

LJ: Is this a policy issue or an administrative issue?

LJ: Shouldn't we also be exploring resource issues other than tenure-track lines? Who is going to approve equipment budgets for new majors, etc?

BB: We don't want to put extra hurdles in front of accomplishing the very things we say we support as a college: ie interdisciplinarity, team-teaching...

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AAC vote: all those in favor with the stated additions: unanimous vote to approve ENV changes to the major.