Academic Priorities Council  
Minutes of November 15, 2011

Attendees: Eliot Moss, Savannah Van Leuvan-Smith, Deborah Picking, Curt Conner, Kathy Debevec, Dick Bogartz (Chair)

1. The Minutes of the Sept. 20th and October 18th meetings were approved.

2. The Council reviewed a proposal submitted by the Center for Public Policy and Administration in CSBS for a Food Studies Certificate Program. While the concept of creating a Certificate Program in Food Studies appears valuable, the Council has identified several issues that need to be addressed prior to approving the proposal.

- First, it was questioned whether a Center may offer a certificate program given that University guidelines stipulate that Centers cannot award degrees or offer majors or courses for regular University credit (see Faculty Senate Website for Center Guidelines):  
  
  Centers and Institutes are organizational units on the Amherst campus created to implement academic and training programs, clinical or community service, or research activities that cannot ordinarily be accommodated within existing department structures. Centers and Institutes cannot award degrees or offer majors or courses for regular University credit, nor can they hire tenure-track or tenured faculty.

  The Center for Public Policy and Administration/CSBS should contact Bryan Harvey on the appropriateness of their unit administering this certificate program.

- The proposal allows for two courses in a student’s current major to be applied toward the certificate program (p. 4). A certificate program in analogous to a minor when there is no major in an area. The guidelines for a minor are that no more than one course from a student’s major can be counted toward their minor. Thus, to be consistent with the standards for a minor, the proposal needs to be modified to read that no more than one course taken by a student to satisfy their major requirements may be applied to the Food Studies Certificate Program.

- On p. 4, the proposal also reads that “at least two, and preferably three, courses above the 100 level should be included in the student’s plan of study.” Given the advanced study expected in a certificate program, the Council would like to see “at least three” of the five courses be above the 100 level.

- On p. 2, the proposal reads that “Certificate students will be required to take 15 credits from among these courses, with at least one course from each of the four areas and the fifth course taken from any of the areas…” Concern was expressed that students would not be able to fulfill this requirement since some of the courses in Cluster 4 are not
available to non-majors and others are very difficult to get into. Therefore, the proposal should state that students should take at least one course from each of three areas or the range of courses in Cluster 4 should be expanded.

- A related concern is that all of the departments with courses identified in the proposal appear not to have been consulted about the inclusion of their courses. There are courses in HTM, Journalism and STPEC and no representatives from these departments are on the steering committee or in the group overseeing the degree program. A member of the Council from Anthropology indicated that the curriculum committee in that department had not been consulted, nor was the Chair. Therefore, it is not clear that all of the courses listed are available to students as non-majors or that students can readily get into the courses. The departments with courses in the certificate program need to provide a letter which indicates the department’s approval of their courses for the certificate program, whether the courses are offered with regularity, and whether non-majors can get into the courses.

- Another concern is if there is adequate support for advising of students in the certificate program. On p. 4 of the proposal, it is indicated that “if advising demands exceed current resources, CPPA and other participating departments are willing to provide a small annual stipend to a member of the steering committee or other UMass staff to help coordinate advising for the program. Letters from the departments should also indicate whether the department is willing to provide for the “small annual stipend” and/or other resources for advising. The proposal should indicate which departments are willing to provide the resources for advising.

- The Council would like to see a commitment in writing from other participating departments who will comprise the steering committee or rotate into positions on the steering committee. This should be specified in the proposal as well.

- Last, the department designations in the proposal and course titles should correspond to those in the course catalog. Typos should also be corrected.