The Academic Priorities Council
Minutes of November 23, 2010

Attendees: John Kingston, Eliot Moss, Jim Rinderle, Bryan Harvey, Craig Nicolson (guest, Environmental Conservation), Josh Stoffel (guest), Jean DeMartinis, David Mednicoff (guest, Public Policy and Legal Studies), Jerri Willett, and Kathy Debevec (Chair)

1. The Minutes of the Nov. 2, 2010 APC meeting were approved.

2. The Council reviewed the Proposal for a Master of Science in Sustainability Science. Craig Nicolson and Josh Stoffel attended the meeting to address questions that members of the Council had regarding the requirements, the educational preparation needed for sustainability jobs, types of jobs available, and the feasibility of students finding internships in the field.

   The Academic Priorities Council voted unanimously to approve the proposed Master of Science in Sustainability Science. The program is aligned with the University’s 2010 UMass Rising strategic plan and supports one of the six high level priorities identified in the plan, specifically that “All students will have the opportunity to participate in an educational curriculum with a focus on environmental sustainability…” This Master of Science degree also fits in with the University’s desire to “promote both theoretical and practical advances that move our communities, our state, and our nation toward a more rational use of energy and better protection for our natural environment.” The internship component encourages students to apply theory to practice and prepares students for careers in the private sector, higher education, local and regional municipalities, and state agencies. The Dean’s industry advisory council views education in sustainability as important and employers are increasingly hiring sustainability coordinators. The proposal is well thought out and supported.

3. The Council reviewed the Proposal for a Master of Public Policy. David Mednicoff attended the meeting as a guest to address any questions the Council had. Professor Mednicoff described how the program evolved in response to a recommendation in the AQUAD reports and the University’s charge to draw more students from the region. He indicated that there is high demand for this program, that the degree has market value, and public policy alums have found good jobs. Enrollment will be limited at first and ramp up gradually. In addition, this may evolve into a joint program with Smith College.

   The Academic Priorities Council unanimously approved the proposed Master of Public Policy degree. The degree is aligned with the University’s strategic plan and priorities identified in the plan. The program is expected to attract new students from Massachusetts and the region, have significant market value for students, and be beneficial for the University as students potentially assume positions of authority in government which may allow them to promote the reputation of the University and influence the flow of resources. The program responds to the call to expand professional masters programs on campus and draw in high quality graduate students. It offers undergraduate students majoring in public policy, both at UMass and in the Five College area, the opportunity to spend a fifth year gaining policy-oriented skills that will enhance their prospects for public service careers in government and non-profit organizations as well as in the private sector.
The program is well conceived and includes an internship component which will encourage the integration of theory and practice and provide students experience in their field, all of which should enhance their prospects of securing a professional position upon graduation.

4. The Council reviewed a Proposal for a Graduate Program in Labor Studies. Several questions and issues were raised by the Council including:
   a. On p. 2, a tentative agreement with the International Association of Machinists was mentioned. What is the agreement? A commitment letter is needed for collaboration.
   b. The courses in List A and List B need a department designation and course numbers.
   c. The specific requirements of the program need to be stated up front. Currently the proposal states that “students must take 15 credits of approved graduate courses” and “Graduate students currently matriculated in other programs at UMass would be allowed to substitute up to 6 credits from other Departments in place of these elective courses, with approval…” What are the approved graduate courses? For a degree in Labor Studies, the courses for the degree should seemingly be in Labor Studies. Given that department and course numbers are absent, it is not clear that the required courses in List A are all in Labor Studies.
   d. The language in the “Transfer of Credits” section is confusing and some of this information seems redundant.

The Council is requesting a revision of the proposal that addresses the issues raised.

5. The Council reviewed the Proposal for an Undergraduate Certificate in Applied Economic Research on Cooperative Enterprises. Several questions and issues were raised that need to be addressed in a revision. These include:
   a. Why would someone doing an internship enroll for 12 credits rather than 6?
   b. Clarification is needed on required coursework:
      i. How can the requirements have a variable credit total (15-24 credits)? Under the section entitled “Required Course Work”, the proposal states that “the three required courses are…” and four courses are listed (two are listed under #1). Is Econ 103 a prerequisite? If so, this should be stated.
      ii. Econ 397EC should be the foundation of the program. On p. 3, the proposal reads “Econ 397EC is currently being taught…and will continue to offer it each semester if enrollment remains high.” Given that this is a requirement, the department needs to commit to the course.
      iii. The next paragraph describes other requirements as flexible and “may be met by a variety of course offerings,” so they “do not include a schedule of their availability here”. Requirements need to be clearly stated. It is not clear how or why requirements can be flexible.
   c. The proposal should go to the Academic Matters Council first to work through all of the issues.