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## **INTERDISCIPLINARY TASK FORCE**

### **Academic Senate Policy Recommendation #S81-74**

At its meeting of May 5, 1981, the Academic Senate approved the following changes in Part IV of the Interdisciplinary Task Force Report:

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Task Force recommends the development and offering of a campus-wide set of interdisciplinary minors numbering perhaps twenty-five.

We envisage interdisciplinary minors as having the following attributes:

- a. They should be centered around coherent themes which transcend disciplinary lines and depart from the traditional domains of single discipline departments.
- b. They should interrelate two or more traditional academic disciplines or fields encompassing more than a single discipline, department or school.
- c. The coherent curricular area should enable students to:
  - 1) recognize the contributions of diverse disciplinary approaches while appreciating the value and limitations of specialized disciplinary knowledge;
  - 2) have the experience of attempting a synthesis sometimes by the application of known interdisciplinary thought frameworks;
  - 3) focus on an emerging and developing topic, perspective or practice.
- d. A minor curriculum should range between 15 and 24 units, excluding stated prerequisites.
- e. The minor should be operated as an academic program with appropriately designated faculty responsible for curriculum development, teaching, personnel decisions, advising and other related functions.
- f. Some overlapping of courses occur with general education and major requirements, but the extent and nature of this possibility should be stipulated in University policy.

Interdisciplinary minors can be complementary to and supportive of disciplinary majors. They provide opportunities for students to pursue studies related to their main academic interests, and at the same time to gain different, broader perspectives. For those students in more specialized or professional majors, interdisciplinary minors add a solid, liberal arts dimension to their education. As an adjunct to the liberal arts majors, interdisciplinary minors may be advantageous for students seeking career opportunities. The minors appear on students' transcripts.

2. The Task Force recommends that selected interdisciplinary minors (to be called integrative minors) be utilized to fulfill some of the requirements in any new General Education program established for the university.

This recommendation relates to that part of the General Education Council draft report that focuses on the need for a significant interdisciplinary element in all students' liberal education. Some of our ideas on the nature of this element appear in the Overview of pp. 4-6.

Ways in which this could be accomplished:

- a. Students could complete an interdisciplinary (integrative) minor which could count toward general education requirements in Segments II and III of the current draft report. Each one of these minors would need prior approval by appropriate bodies.
- b. Students could take 9 units of a chosen sub-set of upper-division courses from interdisciplinary minors which would satisfy Segment III. Again the acceptable sub-sets would need prior approval.

This means of satisfying the interdisciplinary objectives of our general education program has many advantages:

- a.. It provides the student with a coherent educational experience explicitly designed to be interdisciplinary by a group of faculty who have an "on-going" program commitment.
- b. Faculty from all over campus can participate in the development and offering of integrative minors.

c. Students will have an attractive array of options. If they use the sub-set alternative proposed above they will have to take only another 6-15 units to complete a minor which will serve as a valuable complement to their major.

d. The University builds into its structure an incentive for faculty to engage in the development of interdisciplinary minors. This educationally sound opportunity should be especially attractive to those parts of the University which are currently experiencing enrollment problems. For example, some of the potential participants in Pacific Basin Studies program might be in this category. It is one means of keeping valuable faculty resources fully employed.

3. The Task Force recommends the establishment of a University Interdisciplinary Council.

a. Its functions are to:

1) Exercise academic leadership in developing and fostering interdisciplinary efforts for the benefits of the University as a whole.

2) Serve as the collaborating, cooperating, communicating body for all existing interdisciplinary efforts across campus.

3) Consult with schools on the form and characteristics of their interdisciplinary centers.

4) Review and comment on all new, cross-school interdisciplinary curricular proposals both undergraduate and graduate in an advisory capacity to the Associate Provost and the Senate Committee on Curriculum Review and Approval.

5) Consult with Segment III committee in the development of criteria for evaluating proposed sub-sets of interdisciplinary minors and other interdisciplinary packages for meeting general education requirements. Consult subsequently with the Segment III committee in the review of specific proposals.

6) Support faculty who wish to engage in the creation and implementation of interdisciplinary activities whether a single instance such as a team taught course, a research proposal, or a total curriculum. The Council requires access to budgetary resources, including faculty time when necessary, to carry out this function.

7) Publicize and represent the University's interdisciplinary activities to the campus at large and to interested publics.

8) Recommend changes in the University's procedures that facilitate interdisciplinary activities, e.g., FTE accounting, budget review, personnel evaluations, registrations, class schedule construction, etc.

9) Conduct periodic reviews of interdisciplinary activities of students and faculty at San Francisco State and report findings to the President. Special attention should be devoted to the maintenance of high educational quality.

b. The membership of the University Interdisciplinary Council should include:

1) School representatives to the UIC should be elected by the faculty of the school. (8)

2) Chair of Educational Policies Council of the Academic Senate or designee

3) Provost or designee

4) University Coordinator of Interdisciplinary Studies (Dean of Undergraduate Studies)

4. The Task Force recommends that the Dean of Undergraduate Studies serve as the University Coordinator for Interdisciplinary Studies.

a. The University Coordinator shall provide academic leadership for the University in interdisciplinary activities and program development.

b. The functions of the University Coordinator shall include but not be limited to:

1) Work closely with and provide staff support to the University Interdisciplinary Council in all of its functions.

2) Present the recommendations of the Council to the appropriate agencies of the University, e.g., the Provost, the Academic Senate, etc.

3) Chair the University Interdisciplinary Council.

4) Coordinate budgeting and support requests of the University Interdisciplinary Council through the Provost.

5) Work closely with the University Planning Group, the Resources Planning Group, the President's Council and the Academic Senate in order to assure that the interests of interdisciplinary cooperation are represented in all important areas of decision-making.

6) Keep in close contact with the school coordinators and provide whatever facilitation possible to their efforts, especially in the realm of curriculum development.

7) Inform faculty of funding opportunities and provide guidance in the pursuit of extra-mural support of interdisciplinary

research and development.

8) Provide a focal point along with the Council for the University's commitment to interdisciplinary studies.

5. The Task Force recommends that the University take steps -to remove-impediments to involvement in interdisciplinary activities by both faculty and students.

a. Faculty should be encouraged and have the right to participate in interdisciplinary activities. Faculty members should be allowed, if they wish, to teach at least one course outside of their home department each semester as part of their regular teaching load. As usual in any extra-departmental involvement the wishes of the faculty member must be balanced with the curricular needs of his/her home department.

b. In order to facilitate extra-departmental teaching and other forms of interdisciplinary cooperation, the University's permanent FTE accounting system should be changed:

1) In addition to keeping FTE by pre-fix of student registration, FTE should also be recorded by the program, department or school which is providing the faculty time to teach the course.

2) FTE for cross-listed courses should be consolidated and credited (consistent with the previous recommendation) Lo the unit which is supplying the faculty time.

The present FTE accounting system discourages many types of interdisciplinary cooperation, especially across schools. We have checked with the Academic Planner and he sees no serious obstacle to modifying our current system in this proposed manner. In fact, the new computer program makes it a relatively easy task.

c. When faculty do participate in interdisciplinary activities their efforts should be rewarded and not penalized. For example:

1) As required in current university policy, the interdisciplinary contribution of faculty should be effectively characterized and adequately reported in the H RTP process even if it requires a separate input from a source external to the usual channels.

2) Committee and advising assignments in home departments should take into account the interdisciplinary involvement of faculty so that an equitable load sharing occurs.

3) The sharing and joint appointment process needs streamlining or we need creative alternatives to it as the present cumbersome procedures are stifling efforts of this kind.

4) Additional measures of educational performance need devising and applying for purposes of allocating and receiving resources other than straightforward FTE - such as giving recognition to interdisciplinary programs for the increased enrollments caused by their students taking courses in other programs, faculty development potential, additional burdens in advising and committee work, etc.

d) Students with an approved interdisciplinary program of courses (major or minor) should have equal access to those courses wherever they are offered along with students majoring in the departments offering the courses. We are concerned that the new CAR computer program which gives preference to majors in courses within the discipline discriminates against students with interdisciplinary majors or minors who legitimately need the same courses. This problem should be solved before the new program is implemented.

6. The University Interdisciplinary Council, once established, must be evaluated by the Senate at the end of five years and its existence must be extended by positive Senate action.

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