Program Suspension Proposal: B.S. in Aquaculture

Summary: The B.S. degree in aquaculture is offered through the School of Marine Sciences. Enrollment in the program has been very low. SMS offers a B.S. degree in Marine Sciences with a concentration in aquaculture as an alternative. This latter degree has fewer required courses specific to aquaculture and thus can be offered more efficiently with a small number of faculty members having expertise in aquaculture. NSFA proposes to suspend the B.S. degree in aquaculture, while we proceed with plans to eliminate this degree offering.

Rationale for suspension of program: A B.S. degree in aquaculture has been offered for many years. Unfortunately, the program has been plagued by low enrollment. Total enrollment topped 20 students in 1999, but has declined so that only six students are currently enrolled in the degree program. Since AY 05-06, we have conferred fewer than two degrees per year (Table 1. Five year summary of enrollment and degrees conferred). As a result, enrollments in most aquaculture courses have been low, even when offered in alternate years (Table 2).

Table 1. BS Degree in Aquaculture: Enrollment in program and number of degrees conferred annually from AY 2005 – 2006 to present:

Academic year	Fall enrollment count	No. degrees conferred
AY 2005 – 2006	7	2
AY 2006 – 2007	7	1
AY 2007 – 2008	10	2
AY 2008 – 2009	11	1
AY 2009 – 2010	8	1
Five year average	**<9**	**<2**

Table 2. Enrollment in selected aquaculture courses when last offered:

Course designation	Last offered	Enrollment
SMS 401 Critical Issues in Aquaculture	Fall 2010	2
SMS 309 Techniques in Shellfish Aquaculture	Summer 2008	6
SMS 409 Shellfish Aquaculture	Spring 2008	8
SMS 420 Fish Aquaculture I	Fall 2010	7
SMS 421 Fish Aquaculture II	Spring 2009	7
SMS 449 Engineering in Aquaculture	Fall 2008	9
SMS 467 Fish Nutrition and Feeding	Fall 2009	8

While we wish to serve the aquaculture industry, we cannot justify the expense of offering so many specialized courses to a modest number of students. It is our intent to explore eliminating the separate B.S. degree in aquaculture and directing students toward the aquaculture concentration within the B.S. in Marine Science as an appropriate alternative. Enrollment in Marine Sciences is strong. We believe that we can offer a more limited curriculum that provides students with sufficient background and preparation in aquaculture. We do not believe that this action will significantly impact enrollment in SMS. Students presently enrolled in the B.S. degree in aquaculture would be provided an opportunity to complete their degree requirements.

Relationship of the program suspension to institutional mission: Aquaculture is the domesticated production of seafood. This industry is growing world-wide and by some estimates supplies the majority of seafood products consumed. Maine has an aquaculture industry that produces finfish, shellfish and bait. As part of UMaine's land grant mission, the University provides educational programs, research and outreach to this industry.

Suspension of the B.S. degree will not impact our current efforts in aquaculture research or public service. The University recently established an Aquaculture Institute for this purpose. That unit reports to the Vice President for Research.

The aquaculture curriculum is provided by a subset of School of Marine Science faculty members and adjunct faculty. Faculty expertise had declined with several retirements. However, this trend is reversing with the hiring of new faculty associated with the Aquaculture Institute. Suspension of the B.S. degree in aquaculture is not linked to the elimination of any current personnel. SMS will continue to offer a B.S. in marine sciences with a concentration in aquaculture. This enables UMaine to maintain a program that prepares students for careers in aquaculture and related fields.

Assignment of faculty during the suspension period: Faculty having expertise in aquaculture will continue to deliver courses on this topic. These courses will contribute to fulfillment of the aquaculture concentration within the B.S. in marine sciences. As indicated previously, suspension of the B.S. degree in aquaculture is not linked to the elimination of any current personnel.

Impact of the program suspension on students: Students currently enrolled in the B.S. in Aquaculture will have the option of completing their degree or transferring to the aquaculture concentration within the B.S. in marine sciences.

Timetable for program suspension: We wish to suspend admission to the B. S. in aquaculture degree program immediately. The program would remain suspended until the proposal to eliminate the degree is prepared, reviewed and evaluated. We expect those later steps to be completed in less than one calendar year.

Input obtained from meeting and discussion with the appropriate faculty and AFUM: The faculty of SMS have been concerned with the low enrollment in the aquaculture program. In response to that concern, a concentration within a marine science degree was developed as an alternative. While some individual faculty members believe that a separate B.S. degree in aquaculture is warranted, there is a clear realization that the current program is not attracting sufficient student interest.

Respectfully submitted,

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