

PCRRC Assessment and Recommendation

B.S in Climate Change and Culture

15 October 2011

Background and Committee Process: [for Stage 8 sequence]

9/21/11: Information on proposal distributed to Faculty Senate for review and comments.

9/28/11: Meeting with PCRRC and proponents [Kristin Sobolik, Jim Roscoe, Joseph Kelley, Scott Johnson].

10/7/11: Campus-wide hearing; included the proposal's proponents, members of the PCRRC, and members of the campus community.

10/13/11: PCRRC meeting to discuss proposal and draft recommendation for Faculty Senate's approval.

10/19/11: PCRRC recommendation on Faculty Senate agenda.

Overview of the Proposal:

Members of the PCRRC and people who attended the campus-wide hearing generally agreed on the following strengths and advantages of the proposal:

- * It is well crafted, comprehensive, and closely follows the guidelines for new program proposals.
- * If implemented, it will improve connections between departments and colleges; it will bridge social and environmental sciences; this adheres closely to one of the University of Maine's goals: to improve interdisciplinary teaching and research.
- * It relies on established and productive departments and programs at the University of Maine that enjoy international reputations: Earth Sciences, Anthropology, and Climate Change; it identifies a broad range of personnel who are prepared to contribute to the major.
- * It includes a modest requirement of adding a single new courses: ANT 110 Climate Change and Culture Seminar; the rest of the degree requirements will come from existing or easily modified courses.
- * As the proposal notes, "the core of the program is already largely in place." It makes use of existing library resources, equipment, and space, with perhaps additional support from grants for equipment.

Questions Raised by PCRRC and Members of the University of Maine Community:

- * The inclusion of a faculty line in the proposal was discussed at length. Questions included whether the program could exist without the line, and if the line could be added in the future after the program is introduced and students matriculate. In sum, the proponents argued that a new faculty line would be crucial for the creation of the program and to ensure its success. The proposal PCRRC reviewed did not include the “fiscal note” that is required when a proposed program requires new resources.
- * Similarly, the proposal for two teaching assistants - one in Anthropology and one in Sciences - triggered significant discussion. Members of PCRRC noted that the addition of two teaching assistants to those departments would probably come out of a defined and limited pool of teaching assistants at the University that are determined by the Graduate School.
- * The nature of the impact of teaching loads in both Anthropology and Earth Sciences was discussed. Questions were raised about the newly designed Ph.D. in Anthropology and Environmental Policy and its impact on teaching loads to implement and sustain the B.S. degree in Climate Change and Culture. Moreover, the question of the level and frequency of teaching support among faculty with contracts that stipulate a high percentage of research time (75%, for example) will have to be addressed in order make sure that the large number of “faculty involved in the program” (Appendix I) are actually engaged in undergraduate instruction described in the BS program.
- * The feasibility of having students who are already matriculated at the University of Maine transition to the program, or whether it would be exclusively designed around a selected pool of applicants (given the target for a limited number of majors) was discussed at length. Proponents suggested that both cohorts could be accommodated.
- * PCRRC raised questions about the viability of the program should the goals of attracting a large number of out-of-state students fall short of the anticipated numbers. Proponents responded that the program should attract a large number of students from outside Maine because it will be unique among New England’s universities and colleges. The PCRRC notes that more attention will have to be paid to advertising strategies to accomplish the goal of matriculating out-of-state students. Proponents argued that the central themes of climate change and its impact on humans should be enormously attractive for university undergraduates in the twenty-first century.
- * PCRRC requested fuller articulation of the skill sets that would be developed for students, and the proponents added language clarifying specific student learning outcomes (see II, C).

- * The question of double counting majors to credit both Anthropology and Earth Sciences was raised and discussed. PCRRC notes that although it acknowledges the issue, is not responsible for the resolution of this question and its implementation. We recommend immediate administrative attention to the matter of double counting majors, should the B.S. be approved.
- * Questions were raised at the campus-wide hearing on the challenges of having students navigate the program's requirements given its location in two departments from different colleges. Those challenges need to be addressed should the degree be approved.

PCRRC Deliberations (10/13/11) and Summary Comments:

- * The proposal is timely and problem oriented; it articulates an undergraduate concentration that should have great appeal to students in the twenty-first century; students would improve their understanding of the impact that climate change is having on humans and learn strategies for coping with those changes. It will be a unique program in the nation; this will be especially important for attracting out-of-state students to the University of Maine as a "first choice" school; it pays close attention to recruitment.
- * PCRRC notes that it is not the committee's mandate to evaluate or verify the Total Financial Consideration (VI) component of the proposal.
- * PCRRC notes that the fiscal note from the Office of the Vice President for Administration and Finance, as stipulated in Stage 7 of the PCRRC Policy and Procedures Manual, is not included in the proposal.

Recommendation

- * PCRRC recommends moving the proposal to Stage 9 of the Full Program Proposal sequence, based on the findings expressed above.