

At the Yale College faculty meeting on March 7, 2013, Dean Miller charged an Ad Hoc Committee to establish guidelines for current and proposed special academic programs, as well as to envision a frame of reference, and to some extent develop standards, for the potential future formation and review of any further such programs.

These programs have been, and are likely to continue to be, miscellaneous in origin, but they have in common that they stand outside – in some cases only just a bit outside – the roster of majors. Current examples include Global Health and the Journalism Initiative, and we have in hand proposals for Energy Studies and a revised Education Studies.

We see these programs not as minors (that is, less intensive versions of existing majors), nor as trial balloons for new majors, but rather as interdisciplinary or interdepartmental programs not feasible within a single major, enriching the academic opportunities available to Yale students. They provide to selected undergraduates a framework and favorable conditions, including expert faculty mentoring and a cohort of able peers, for undertaking concentrated course work in a field or discipline not already covered by an existing major. Many of these programs take advantage of methods and materials drawn from multiple disciplines to explore the nature of pressing problems of interest to contemporary scholars and to consider the merits of possible solutions. Others may emphasize the development of a set of skills that complement or extend the skills students acquire in their major or through the distributional requirements.

We propose the following guidelines for the approval of new special academic programs in Yale College:

- All such new programs shall, in the future, be vetted by the Committee on Majors before being presented to the Yale College faculty for consideration. Faculty interest and commitment to a proposed program shall be a necessary precondition.
- The Provost's office shall present to the Committee on Majors its assessment of the economic viability of such proposals. All such programs should be revenue-neutral or bring their own resources, such as from a new gift, a grant, or a fund overseen by an institute, council, or school within the University; the costs of such program include funding for staff support and salary for outside faculty as needed, and making affordable the cost of summer or school-year co-curricular opportunities.
- There should be a presumption that no specific program will become a permanent feature of the Yale College curriculum, but that each requires periodic review and re-approval to continue. Once a program is approved for an initial set period (usually five years), a faculty-led steering group for the program shall regularly review and revise the requirements and evaluate the commitment of instructors, mentors, and advisers to the program. Outside

- review shall be conducted by the Committee on Majors in the penultimate year of the term for which such programs may be initially approved.
- A program director, generally a person with a faculty appointment, shall be appointed by the Dean of Yale College to coordinate advising and mentoring of students applying to and admitted to the program and to oversee the curriculum and any co-curricular requirements, such as internships.
  - Each special program shall, in general, create and staff its own gateway and capstone courses. A defined cluster of courses drawn from existing majors shall normally form the core of the program. The roster of such courses should be comprehensive and adaptable enough to withstand some change over time as faculty go on leave or discharge other teaching and service obligations.
  - Normally the requirements of a special academic program should total no fewer than four courses and no more than eight. We suggest that no more than two course credits shall be allowed to count towards completion of both the student's major and a special academic program.
  - A defined experience outside the Yale College classroom (such as community service, internships, or field work, approved in advance by the director) will normally be an important feature of the program, offered either over the summer or during term time. Consistent with Yale College policy, no course credit shall be given for these unless they also entail a program of regular course work.
  - The capstone course for the special program may take the form of a group project or of individual projects, but in no case shall it be substantively the same as the senior project of a student's major.
  - Admission to the program shall be limited to the number of students that can be supported by faculty resources and by the availability of required summer or term-time co-curricular opportunities. If there are pre-requisite courses, those pre-requisites should be available to a reasonable number of students on a regular basis.

Other details, we believe, should be allowed to vary from program to program, as appropriate. We take no stance on whether a student should be permitted to complete one of these special programs as well as receive permission to do two majors. We think that this is a matter for future study as we observe how the presence of more such programs affects the ecology of the curriculum and influences student choices.

While the committee is generally in favor of such programs, we are not of one mind about them, and in particular we are uncertain about how they should be certified. Current practice is that the director issues a letter attesting that the student has completed the requirements. There is no single central archive of this information. For purposes of consistent and reliable recordkeeping, we propose that the University Registrar's Office should become the official repository of information about who has been admitted to and who has completed such special programs. But

some of us want to maintain a distinction between *certification* and *certificates*, with the latter proving, on some campuses, to have become “merit badges” or collectibles. We suggest that the University Registrar’s Office and the Yale College Dean’s Office work out a practicable system for recording completion of these programs and confirm that system with the Committee on Majors.

Finally, we propose that no more than five such new programs should be created by the faculty in the five-year period beginning July 1, 2013, after which a comprehensive review of the value, and costs, of such programs should be presented to the Yale College faculty.

Respectfully submitted,

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