January 26, 2012

TO: College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee

FROM: Lyle Ford, Chair
Department of Physics and Astronomy

RE: Program Changes

We request implementation of the following program change with the next possible *University Catalog*. The Department of Physics and Astronomy approved this action on January 26 by a vote of 11-0.

Pre-Professional Program: Pre-Architecture (Code 005-900)

FROM: Page 57 of the 2011-12 *Undergraduate Catalog*

TO: Eliminate the program

Why:

The Pre-Architecture program at UWEC is not well-matched to the array of courses offered at the university, enrolls a small number of students, and serves them poorly. Therefore, the Department of Physics and Astronomy proposes that this program be eliminated.

The Pre-Architecture program was initiated many decades ago when the field was closely related to civil engineering. Students would take a core of mathematics and science courses that is similar to what a pre-engineering student at UWEC would take. Architecture has evolved considerably since then, so much so that it is a subfield of art and design rather than engineering. The only physics course the Department of Physics and Astronomy offers that students in the program can take toward their degree is Physics 211, an introductory physics course that is at a lower technical level than these students would have taken thirty years ago. The only other course at UWEC that relates to architecture is the basic drawing course Art 107. Other than those two, students take whatever general education courses we can find to match the architecture school to which the student should transfer after one year here. If the student stays longer, it just puts them further behind. When they transfer, they are still pre-architecture students for two to three more semesters at the new school until they make up the two or three architecture courses which we do not offer and never have. For most of the students who have followed this route, it has cost them an extra semester beyond what it would have taken if they had started at the architecture school in the first place. It is difficult to justify a program when the best advice we can give students when they walk in the door is to transfer to another school immediately.
While the seven students presently in the program do not consume many resources, it is not cost-free. Aside from seats in classrooms, they do require advising. Tom Lockhart is the program’s advisor and has developed some expertise in the area. He is however nearing retirement and we have no one else in the Department of Physics and Astronomy who could adequately fill the role. One might argue that someone could learn the position but is awkward to have a physicist advising an artist. While the program could be moved to the Department of Art & Design, they have trouble accommodating the number of majors they have now and in any case, would not solve the problem of the lack of appropriate coursework.

One last argument to preserve the program is that we can attract students to UWEC and hope they change majors to remain here to earn a bachelor’s degree and then earn a master’s degree in architecture elsewhere. This path has been chosen by four students over the past 15 years. The Admissions Office recognizes the tenuous nature of the program and when students inquire about it, admissions staff tends to refer them to other schools.

If UWEC did not have a pre-architecture program, it is difficult to see how anyone could successfully propose the university develop one. Without allocating resources we do not have to develop more coursework to support the program, all we are doing is encouraging students to come to UWEC for the briefest time without substantially satisfying any of their academic goals. Eliminating the program is the best option for both the university and these students.