TO: Jean Pratt, Chair, Academic Policies Committee
FROM: David Baker, Interim Dean, Arts and Sciences
RE: CAS Chair’s Survey: Academic Minor Requirement
January 21, 2013

After lengthy discussion, the CAS chairs and directors responded to a survey asking for their opinions about whether or not the academic minor should be dropped as a degree requirement; maintained; or modified, either by reducing its credit minimum to 18 or by permitting an alternative of one or more 12-18-credit certificates. 20 chairs responded to the following question:

Which of the following do you most strongly support?

- Eliminate the minor requirement.
  6 support eliminating the minor.

- Maintain the current requirement: standard major and minor combination, or comprehensive major, or two standard majors.
  4 support maintaining the requirement.

- Modify the minor requirement by reducing its credit minimum to 18.
  2 support reducing the credit minimum.

- Provide an alternative: standard minor OR one or more 12-18-credit certificates.
  6 support an alternative requirement.
  2 support either reducing credit minimum OR alternative requirement.

Additionally, chairs were asked to respond to the following questions with “yes” or “no” answers:

- Do you support eliminating or modifying the 60 unique credit rule? (Any combination of standard major and minor, or two majors must contain 60 unique credits.)
  Yes: 18  No: 2

- Do you support a policy to prevent “credit creep” in the major?
  Yes: 8  No: 12
Survey comments:

In support of eliminating the minor requirement:

The depth requirement is most easily maintained by requiring x number of upper-division credits outside of their major prefix in order to obtain a degree at UWEC.

The third and fourth choices (modify minor; provide an alternative) mainly add complexity. We expect most students will want to continue to do comprehensive majors, minors, and certificates but some will not and that choice is ok.

In support of modifying the minor minimum credit requirement:

I still believe that this could be a requirement in A&S rather than university-wide. I also like the idea of (an alternative to the minor) that can be accomplished with certificates, but I think that sets up an uneven playing field if a 24-credit minor is considered equivalent to a 12-credit certificate.

In support of eliminating the 60 unique credit rule:

Takes too much time to figure this out. Time could be better spent advising students on meaningful classes to take.

Pertaining to a policy to prevent “credit creep” in the major:

If there is no minor requirement, then it is indefensible to allow some majors 60 credits while limiting others to 36. If the minor is dropped, then I think all majors should have a common target for credits—maybe 36 to 44.

No. I would normally say yes, however, my knowledge of how difficult it is for advisors to navigate the 60 unique credit rule leads me to vote no as I think it would be extremely difficult to implement.

Yes. I suppose it’s ok to do this as long as it applies only to the courses within the major itself. For example if biology were to decide that biology majors must take more mathematics credits we could do so, but we’d still be limited to requiring no more than 36 credits in biology.

Summary of comments and issues raised during discussion:

The minor offers a way to recruit students to the major.

The minor offers a way to discover “out of the mainstream” disciplines like global studies, language studies, anthropology, etc.

The minor makes students more attractive to graduate programs and prospective employers.
The minor supports our brand as a liberal arts-based institution.

Eliminating the minor doesn’t appear to be “an intentional way to organize the degree.” Will students continue to enroll in minors if they are not required?

Non-traditional students often do not want a minor—note popularity of the BPS degree program.

The minor limits program flexibility.

Create multiple alternatives to the minor—certificates, etc.

Change the minor’s credit requirement to a range: 18-24 credits.

Designate the professional education courses required in the teacher education degree to be an academic minor.

To create flexibility, eliminate the 60 unique credit rule.

Determine LE framework before making a decision about the minor’s future.