Report for the University Senate

University Senate Committee: Academic Policies Committee

Brief History of Issue - why the issue is being considered:

Related to liberal education reform are discussions of related university requirements. One university requirement is the major/minor concentration (with associated 60-unique-credit rule) as articulated on page 45 of the 2012-2013 Undergraduate Catalog:

Each candidate for a baccalaureate degree must present at minimum 60 unique* credits earned in either of the following ways:
• One standard major of at least 36 semester credits plus one minor of at least 24 semester credits, or
• One comprehensive major of at least 60 semester credits (no minor required)

All four colleges were asked to provide input related to the possibility of removing the required minor as a university requirement. The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) is likely the most impacted by this decision. Therefore, the CAS chairs, with input from their faculty, discussed the related issues of the required minor and the 60-credit rule. As seen on the Minor Survey.pdf supporting material, no clear recommendation from the College of Arts and Sciences chairs is evident. However, eliminating the minor or providing alternative options received the strongest support. We recommend providing flexible options to the required minor.

Points Discussed by Committee:

1. Student senator input: tuition is high, required minor might contribute toward extending average student time to graduation. However, eliminating the minor might result in a graduate being less marketable.

2. Eliminating the minor without providing some type of structure might not provide enough structure for those students who need structure.

3. Some other UW universities have no required minor and their minor and certificate programs are flourishing.

4. Requiring a secondary area of concentration, but with options for fulfillment, would provide both flexibility and structure.

5. A secondary area of concentration
   a. encourages all students to be sure to take advantage of the opportunity a secondary area of concentration provides for further substantial learning in depth, and for further intellectual and personal growth, as well as enhances students’ marketability in their pursuit of desirable jobs careers and students’ qualifications in striving to be accepted to—and offered helpful levels of support while attending—graduate school encourages students to explore fields that they enter UWEC knowing little to nothing about, yet which they experience of strong interest, but which they are at the same time hesitant to concentrate in because they don’t readily associate these fields with desirable job and career prospects; in working with a required major together with a required secondary area of concentration students can balance concentration in a seemingly more overtly vocationally oriented area with concentration in a seemingly less overtly vocationally oriented area;
   b. supports the viability of academic disciplines, and intellectual fields, which are central to our mission, and our values, as a liberal arts institution, but which currently tend to rely heavily on minors to be able to sustain major along with general education course offerings.

6. Objections to the continuation of the required minor centered on the following points:
a. Why can’t or why shouldn’t students have the option to take advantage of the benefits a minor can provide, if they choose to do so, without requiring this of all students?
b. It seems that a significant dimension of the concern to preserve the required minor is about protecting programs and not necessarily about enabling outcomes for students.
c. A number of current minors maintain hidden requirements, in terms of prerequisites students must satisfy before they can even begin to take any courses in the minor; this means the minor turns out to require often significantly more than 24 credits.

7. The number of credits required for certificates, minors and standard majors is likely to be a future discussion topic. That is a separate issue.

Pros of Recommendation:
1. Providing students pursuing a standard major with the option of pursuing another major or a minor or a certificate provides structure and depth while simultaneously providing opportunities for exploration and further depth.
2. Providing students pursuing a standard major with the option of pursuing another major or a minor or a certificate addresses the benefits and objections stated above.

Cons of Recommendation:
1. We’re still requiring structure, which limits students’ flexibility in tailoring their academic program.
2. Some may think that a 12-18 credit certificate does not provide enough structure.

Technology/Human Resource Impact: None

Committee Recommendation:
Remove the major-minor concentration from the baccalaureate degree requirements and replace that requirement with a requirement that a standard major be supplemented by a secondary area of concentration such as another standard major or a minor or a certificate.
MOTION FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

The Academic Policies Committee,

by a vote of __5__ for to __1__ against on February 5, 2013

recommends that the major-minor concentration be removed from the baccalaureate degree requirements and be replaced with a requirement that a standard major be supplemented by a secondary area of concentration such as another standard major or a minor or a certificate.

Corresponding changes to the Undergraduate Catalog (references are to 2012-2013 edition) follow:

- Page 38: *Major-minor Concentration—minimum unique credit requirement……………………………………………..60 credits. BE REMOVED
- Page 44: University Requirements. From these options the student, in consultation with an adviser, can plan a program which permits exploration of areas outside the major/minor concentration, in directions suited to individual needs and interests.
- Page 45. Original MAJOR-MINOR CONCENTRATION
  Each candidate for a baccalaureate degree must present at minimum 60 unique* credits earned in either of the following ways:
  • One standard major of at least 36 semester credits plus one minor of at least 24 semester credits, or
  • One comprehensive major of at least 60 semester credits (no minor required)
  As another option, a minor may be replaced by a second standard major; however, a student who elects this option, or any combination of majors and/or minors beyond the minimum required, should be aware of the UW System policy whereby credits earned beyond 165 (or 30 credits beyond the total required for a program, whichever is higher) will be assessed at a higher level of tuition.
- Page 45. Revised ACADEMIC CONCENTRATIONS
  Each candidate for a baccalaureate degree must present one of the following:
  • Comprehensive major
  • Standard major plus one of the following
    ◦ Another standard major, or
    ◦ A minor, or
    ◦ A certificate
  A student who elects to pursue another standard major, or any combination of majors, minors and/or certificates beyond the minimum required, should be aware of the UW System policy whereby credits earned beyond 165 (or 30 credits beyond the total required for a program, whichever is higher) will be assessed at a higher level of tuition.
Required Minor

Page 50. Original

Major-Minor Requirements. A standard major (a minimum of 36 credits) must be supplemented by a minor (a minimum of 24 credits). No minor is required with a Comprehensive Major (60 or more credits) or with two majors of 36 or more credits each. Any combination of standard major and minor, or two majors must contain 60 unique credits.

Page 50. Revised.

Academic Concentration Requirements. A standard major must be supplemented by a secondary area of concentration such as another standard major or a minor or a certificate.

Implementation* Date: Publication in 2014-2015 Catalogue; * may be applied to anyone applying for graduation from Chancellor approval forward.

Signed: ______ Jean A. Pratt_____
Chair of the Committee

Send to: University Senate Office