

Meeting of the College Assembly
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Kansas Room, Kansas Union
April 7, 2009 – 4:00 PM

AGENDA

- I. Assembly called to order**
- II. Establishment of Quorum**
NOTE: As per College Assembly by-laws, 10% (80 members) of the Assembly must be present to address the Order of the Day
- III. Order of the Day**
 - a. As brought forth by motion of the College Academic Council:**
“Add a second non-major degree track to the existing BGS degree AND allow all departments in CLAS to enforce admissions criteria to their major,” presented by Professor Greg Madden, Chair of Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Advising (CUSA)
 - b. Discussion**
 - c. Call for motion to put the Order of the Day to a mail (electronic) ballot as specified in College Bylaws**
- IV. Other Orders of the Day**
- V. Call for Motion to Adjourn**

Addenda

- 1. Rationale for the Order of the Day (compiled by Greg Madden, CUSA Chair).**
- 2. Pros and cons of the Order of the Day (compiled by Assistant Dean Kim McNeley)**

Addendum #1 (Compiled and presented by Greg Madden, CUSA chair)

At the beginning of the fall semester, CUSA was asked to consider interrelated issues:

- There appears to be a demand for offering a distance-education, liberal-arts, non-major BGS degree to students graduating from Kansas community colleges who are unable to move to Lawrence.
- There also is some demand for offering a liberal-arts, non-major BGS degrees to students attending the Edwards campus who have a limited number of majors from which to choose.
- A seemingly unrelated issue that became related as discussions within CUSA continued is that some KU students are unable to gain admission to their desired major because of major admissions criteria imposed by six departments.

- Some of these students struggle to find a new major that meets their needs and within which they can obtain a graduating GPA (≥ 2.0 in junior/senior level coursework). For example, a number of students have gone into Economics, a degree in which they are unable to earn a graduating GPA. Economics, not able to impose a major-admission criterion, increased the rigor of their major course of study.
- Students who learn that they will be unable to pursue the major of their choice, sometimes do so late in the game. Pursuing a different major decreases their probability of graduating in four years. There is some concern that this will become a more acute issue when tuition compact students are trying to graduate but cannot.
- Rather than recommending that these admissions criteria be revoked, CUSA believes there is merit in allowing all departments in the college to impose major admission criteria. As you are well aware, other CLAS departments have expressed an interest in doing so.
- A primary merit is that selective admissions criteria allow the department to clearly communicate to students the skills necessary to succeed in the major, and the department's minimum standards of achievement in the core classes in which these skills are taught.
- As implied earlier, admissions criteria will reduce the number of cases that CUSA considers each year where a student is in his/her fourth or fifth year and is in a major where they are unlikely to be able to achieve a graduating GPA. The student would never have been allowed to get themselves into this situation had they been required to meet an admissions criterion.
- One might reasonably ask if KU should be in the business of offering non-major degrees to students who cannot meet a major admissions criterion? CUSA believes that we should offer these students the opportunity to obtain a non-major BGS degree as long as that degree has adequate academic rigor. As you will see by studying Component 1 of our proposal, we propose to replace the major with coursework in world language and culture, natural sciences and math, and a breadth requirement that will ensure that students receive broad training in the liberal arts and sciences.
- We have attempted to craft the non-major BGS degree so that it meets the goals of general education at KU.
- For example, the standard principal course requirements meet Goal 1 (enhance research, critical thinking, and application skills).
- The breadth, world culture/language, and natural science and math requirements address Goal 2 (acquire a breadth of knowledge and the ability to integrate across areas of study) and Goals 3 & 4 (reading, writing, numeracy, and communications skills, and knowledge and appreciation of cultural diversity).
- CUSA offers this proposal as a two-component package which was approved as a package and must be considered by the College Assembly as a package. Allowing other majors to impose admissions criteria will, we believe, improve the preparation of our students and will aid them in identifying a major in which they are likely to succeed and graduate in a timely fashion. However, imposing these criteria will increase the time to graduation of students who meet KU graduation GPA requirements but cannot gain admission to their first and possibly even their second desired major. If KU is to have a graduating GPA requirement of 2.0, then we must offer these students a BGS degree that recognizes the broad training they have received in the liberal arts and sciences.

Addendum #2 (Compiled and presented by Assistant Dean Kim McNeley)

The current proposal will positively:

1. Encourage students to explore a wider breadth of CLAS disciplines earlier in their undergraduate careers.
 - A review of the breadth of study of 2007-08 graduates indicated that 78% of CLAS graduates studied in 15 or greater departments in the College. A significant amount of this breadth occurs late in student's curriculum.
 - The current proposal will reinforce academic advising encouraging students to explore at least 15 departments in the College as they determine a potential major or minor OR maintain the option of the Non-major BGS.

2. Increase the overall language/world culture requirement to a higher standard than in the current BGS degree with major option general education requirements.
 - The current proposal will reinforce academic advising encouraging students to explore language by limiting a common concern regarding the commitment to four semesters of language study.
 - While instituting a one-year language requirement for the BGS track would be preferential, it is estimated that this would potentially require an additional 1100 language seats per term.

3. Reinforce the value of the key components of a degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences (writing, argument and reason, numeracy, breadth of study, etc).
 - The current proposal will create a closer balance between the study of the humanities, natural sciences and mathematics, and social sciences.
 - The current proposal will offer maximum flexibility in completing a bachelor's degree while still meeting the depth requirement of 45 Junior/Senior hours of study and the performance requirement of a 2.0 cumulative KU GPA for all Bachelor's degrees. This flexibility will increase opportunities for students unable to study on KU's campus in the traditional way.

4. Allow an academic department to set Major Admission Standards.
 - Major Admission Standards clearly communicate realistic expectations of successful completion of a major and/or the need for an alternate field of study early, rather than late, in the student's career. Student's performing at the D level in prerequisites and/or courses required for admission would be given clear feedback regarding their lack of foundational knowledge or skills.
 - Major Admission Standards allow a department to establish a common foundation of knowledge and/or skills in which the major field of study may build in upper-division courses.
 - Major Admissions Standards would reduce the student misperception that study in the professional schools is of greater value and academic rigor.
 - Success in meeting non-competitive admission requirements is within the student's control, not dependant on other potential applicants, reducing the denial of the personal responsibility for students unable to meet these requirements.
 - Approximately 25% of CLAS students have cumulative GPAs between 2.0 and 2.5, and we anticipate that the majority will be able to demonstrate above average academic performance in an area of personal interest (potential major). A minority of students will continue to meet good academic standing, yet not be able to meet admission requirements for a major; therefore a viable degree option is necessary.

5. Impact the current advising system minimally.

- 51% of CLAS juniors have not declared a major and are currently required to meet with an advisor each term. Over 50% of seniors, those unable to meet graduation requirements, meet with CLAS graduation advisors currently.
- The current proposal alleviates faculty from advising students that are not interested in specific study matter but only the earliest completion a degree.

The current proposal may negatively:

1. Increase student and faculty advisor confusion regarding two separate sets of requirements for a BGS degree.
 - Current BGS requires a Major and a second major, minor, or co-major.
 - In our current culture, students identify themselves not as a liberal arts student, but as particular major. The current proposal will be unpopular for the student.
 - The current proposal will increase academic advising situations in which students are unhappy with the realistic options presented when only viable options are the BGS, Non-major option.
2. Perpetuate the perception of a lower-quality (BA-lite) degree option.
 - The current name of the option, “BGS, Non-major” suggests a degree with fewer requirements, not an increase breadth and balance of study.
3. Force departments to develop admission criteria in order to: 1) avoid a perception that the department’s major is of lesser value or rigor than other departments; 2) avoid an increase in students majoring in, but not interested in, that particular major due to another departments admission criteria.
4. Increase the departmental administrative responsibility to support the admission process or increase the requirements for technology in tracking student readiness for the major.
 - Current tracking technology is in development, but not anticipated for implementation before Fall 2010.
5. Require an immediate update of the University’s current transfer credit evaluation system (CredTran) to address the potential increase in distance programs.