

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Benjamin S. Rashford
Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics
Dept. 3354 • Agriculture Building •
1000 E. University Ave., Laramie, WY 82071-3354
(307) 766-6474 • fax (307) 766-5544 • www.uwyo.edu/agecon

March 24, 2017

RE: Graduate Council Review of Program Elimination Proposals

Dear Provost Miller,

In accordance with UniReg 6-43 and 6-702.C, and in collaboration with the Academic Planning Committee, the Graduate Council has reviewed the proposals to eliminate six graduate programs at UW: MA German, MA French, MA Philosophy, MA Sociology, MS Neuroscience, and PhD Statistics. The Council preformed its review through subcommittees (see below): each subcommittee reviewed the elimination proposal materials, coordinated with the Academic Planning Committee to collect additional information (when necessary), and drafted recommendations for review by the Council. The Council then reviewed and revised each subcommittee's draft, and cast a vote in support, or not, of each recommendation. Council members voted unanimously to support the attached recommendations for the MA in German, MA in French, MA in Sociology, MA in Philosophy; and voted nearly unanimously (one vote not to support) to support the attached recommendations for the MS in Neuroscience and PhD in Statistics.

Program Review Subcommittees:

MA German & MA French: Mary Alice Bruce (ED) and Suzie Young (ED)
MA Philosophy: Carolyn Pepper (AS), Sreejayan Nair (HS), and Phil Mullins (Student Rep)
MA Sociology: Stephanie Oneto (BU), Kelly Kinney (AS), Michael Potter (AS)
PhD Statistics & MS Neuroscience: Jay Gatlin (AG) and Suresh Muknahallipatna (EN)

Before proceeding to the specific reviews, the Council offers some general comments about the proposals and review process. Given that these reviews were seemingly initiated with cost savings in mind, Council members were challenged to critically evaluate the merits of each proposal. The budget information provided in the proposals was generally vague (or overly aggregated), making it difficult to determine what, if any, cost savings might be realized. Council members appreciate, nonetheless, that cost savings and related efficiency improvements can take many forms in the short- and long-run, and may not be easily discernible. Critical review must therefore incorporate a broader and longer-term perspective – considering, for example, trajectories in disciplinary demand and university-/college-level strategic planning. We, however, felt ill prepared to take such a perspective. We had to examine elimination proposal in isolation, and were given little to no information on broader-level strategic planning

efforts. Thus, we were unable to consider broader tradeoffs (e.g., freeing up GA allocations to strategically target focal programs, or relieving pressure to fill empty faculty and staff positions) that should influence program elimination decisions.

The Council would also offer some observations about the potential risks of eliminating graduate programs in general. Graduate students, with their research and teaching support, bring youthful enthusiasm and intellectual vitality to their degree programs. In many disciplines, graduate students are necessary – both physically and intellectually – to support faculty research programs and teaching loads. Even in small numbers, graduate students help to ensure faculty remain research active and scientifically engaged. Graduate students are therefore central to the land-grant mission of the University. As a result, the absence of graduate programs (in general) will almost surely reduce the University’s ability to recruit and retain the highest quality faculty. Eliminating a graduate program may therefore, by default, be a de-facto elimination of the entire program. This potential should be carefully considered during this elimination process, and the University should strive to ensure that all faculty (as is consistent with their job appointment) have access to vibrant graduate students.

With that prelude in mind, please find the attached five recommendations (we combined the MA French and MA German proposals into one). Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Graduate Council can be of further assistance.

On behalf of the Graduate Council,



Benjamin S. Rashford
Chair, UW Graduate Council

Enclosures: 5

cc: Scott Shaw, Chair, UW Faculty Senate
Steven Bieber, Chair, Academic Planning Committee
Ann Hild, Interim Associate Vice President for Graduate Education

MA French and MA German

1. What are the strengths, merits, and/or benefits of the elimination proposal?

One of the potential strengths of this proposal is that faculty will continue to offer undergraduate programs in French and German. Thus, students will have the opportunity to gain the expertise and competencies to open doors for successful careers in the global economy, while faculty will be able to focus their attention on the undergraduate programs. The Department of Modern and Classical Languages, along with the Dean of Arts & Sciences, concur that the MAs in French and German should be discontinued.

2. What are the costs or weaknesses of the proposal?

Faculty and others support the elimination of the MA languages programs. However, the glaring weakness in this proposal is that no apparent savings will be gained by elimination of faculty or APL positions. In addition, the suggestion to form a new MA in World Languages does not address the extremely small total number of students currently enrolled in graduate languages programs. OIA data indicate that, during 2015-16, 2 students were enrolled in French, and 1 student was enrolled in German. The latest OIA data available, Fall 2015, also indicate that French produced 1 graduate in 2015, and German produced 0 graduates. In addition, Russian, a language program that was referred to in several of the documents reviewed, showed 0 students enrolled in 2015-16 and 0 graduates in 2015.

In order to describe the complete picture of the languages offerings, the MA in Spanish showed 11 students enrolled in 2015-16 and 6 graduates in 2015. This program area is the strongest of the modern languages in terms of enrollment; if a new MA in World Languages is approved, will it actually be primarily students in Spanish? It appears that even with a new MA, courses specific to French and German will have to continue to be offered, and will likely be under-enrolled.

3. What consequences, positive or negative, would you foresee in elimination of the program?

Increased attention to the undergraduate programs would help bolster the success of students in the languages programs and may allow more time for faculty recruitment of undergraduate students. Additionally, if the department is interested in a modern languages education program at the undergraduate level, this would give the faculty more opportunity to focus their interests and efforts on creating, developing, and maintaining such a program. The College of Education's modern language education program is also under consideration for elimination; if it is selected for elimination, this opens new avenues for faculty in modern and classical languages. The impact of a vitalized focus on undergraduate programs could be an enhanced interest and increased enrollment of undergraduates in modern and classical languages.

4. What alternatives could be proposed in lieu of elimination?

One alternative is to propose that the current faculty members develop strong recruitment strategies, particularly in light of the possibility of the elimination of College of Education's modern language programs.

5. What is your recommendation regarding elimination of the programs?

We recommend the MAs in French and German be eliminated. The MA in Russian was included in the initial materials but then seemed to be dropped from further discussion. If it is still being considered, we would also recommend its elimination since it appears to be in the same low-enrollment, low-graduation rate situation as the MAs in French and German but with even fewer students.

In addition, we do not necessarily support the development of a new MA in World Languages. The proposed 36 credit-hour program includes 21 credit hours that seem to be language specific. This would seem to result in under-enrolled classes and lead to another consideration of elimination in the future. We caution future reviewers to note that the creation of new graduate programs requires a multi-step process (including Graduate Council and Trustee approval), which would require evidence of sufficient student demand and course enrollment. The proposed new degree program should not therefore be used as justification of these eliminations – it is a wholly separate process whose outcomes is not guaranteed.

MA in Philosophy

1. What are the strengths, merits, and/or benefits of the elimination proposal?

Eliminating the Philosophy MA program would save the college 2.5 GA lines that could be distributed elsewhere. The Dean argues that eliminating the MA program would strengthen the BA program, although the department makes a compelling argument that this would not be the case (because of the teaching support graduate students provide). Under this program elimination, no faculty would be terminated - this statement is only a strength if there is an explicit goal to reduce the number of programs and not necessarily create cost savings.

2. What are the costs or weaknesses of the proposal?

The quality of the Philosophy M.A. program is not in question. The program is highly selective with a 15% admissions rate, successfully produces graduates, with 13 of 16 enrolled students completing the program within the past 5 years, and has excellent outcomes with 30% of graduates going on to highly ranked Ph.D. programs.

Philosophy is also a core discipline for the liberal arts. Eliminating the MA program would weaken the department and its role within the larger University community.

It is less clear to us whether having dual listed classes at the 4000 and 5000 level is a strength of the program or a sign of weakness. Typically, having graduate students in a senior level class is viewed as evidence that the department is unable to meet its teaching demands. Some on the Grad Council worry that graduate students could be receiving less challenging material geared toward senior level students rather than graduate level work. The Philosophy Department argues that the nature of the discipline challenges the seniors to keep up with the graduate students' level of discourse. Moreover, the placement rate of M.A. students into highly ranked Ph.D. programs suggests that they are not getting a "watered down" graduate level experience by sharing the classroom with advanced undergraduates.

Given the structure of instruction in the Philosophy department, eliminating the MA program would likely weaken the BA program by removing discussion sections and the key role of MA students in pushing the BA students to excel by modeling arguments.

Eliminating this program would also lower morale in Philosophy and other humanities programs that currently feel unsupported by the university. Given the core role of Philosophy in a University environment, lower morale would be expected across the College and University. Lower morale could lead to loss of prominent UW faculty in the Philosophy department.

In general, it is unclear why this program was selected for review as it appears to be a healthy program. Data indicate the program is competitive (15% acceptance rate) and produces graduates in a timely manner.

3. What consequences, positive or negative, would you foresee in elimination of the program?

To the positive, the College Dean would be able to redistribute 2.5 GA lines to support other programs as supported by strategic planning. Additionally, if program elimination is itself an administrative goal, this could be counted as one eliminated program.

To the negative, discontinuing the MA will likely may have a negative impact on BA students. GAs currently lead discussion sections of Intro classes with 60-80 students. As highlighted by the department, these discussion sections provide BA students an opportunity to practice “doing philosophy.” It is unclear whether faculty would be able to lead smaller class sections to provide this level of discourse. Moreover, discourse, “doing philosophy,” happens between the MA and BA students in and out of class and serves to recruit students into the BA program. GAs also sometimes teach 2000-level courses, and it is unclear whether faculty could pick up this teaching. More broadly, graduate programs typically improve the quality and quantity of research in a department, with publications from MA students increasing the reputation of the program, and graduate programs enhance the diversity of the University community by drawing International students.

4. What alternatives could be proposed in lieu of elimination?

We support a grace period to further investigate a 3-2 program and how it would affect faculty teaching loads. If there is a need for Philosophy to extend its reach across campus, perhaps there are other colleges that could benefit from their expertise in ethics (e.g., College of Health Sciences or Biomedical Sciences program).

5. Recommendation

After reviewing the material provided to the Graduate Council, we are aware that there is much that we do not know. Specifically, we do not know the financial impact of eliminating this program or whether the elimination would contribute sufficiently to financial savings. It is also likely that we do not know all of the Dean’s reasons for the proposed program elimination without broader contextual information about the College’s strategic plan, anticipated future changes (e.g., retirements that would further restrict teaching capacity), or plans to, and rationales for, reallocating resources to other programs.

Given the information provided to us, ***we recommend maintaining the Philosophy M.A. program.*** This is a successful and thriving program, and it particularly supports and enhances the experience of undergraduate students.

MA in Sociology

1. What are the strengths, merits, and/or benefits of the elimination proposal?

Given the current state of the department (4 faculty members), it would be difficult to adequately support the BA and MA program in Sociology. As Dean Lutz stated in her recommendation, it is unlikely that the department will be granted additional faculty lines.

2. What are the costs or weaknesses of the proposal?

The graduate program is currently characterized as being mid-demand. However, it is the only program in this category that is being considered for elimination. As pointed out by several existing faculty members, there are other A&S graduate programs that have been categorized as low-demand yet are not being considered for elimination. There is no explanation for this seemingly arbitrary decision. In addition, Dean Lutz inconsistently used the term “low-demand” for the MA program in the original proposal, which seems to also be incorrectly used by other administrators.

The proposal doesn't provide separate financial information for the BA and MA programs, and therefore it is not possible to analyze the financial impact of eliminating this program given the way the data are currently reported.

We also do not have enough data to see the translation of gains if the program is closed. The costs for delivering this program appear to be “sunk” and therefore eliminating the Master's does not seem to yield greater financial efficiency. It is also unclear how the elimination of the graduate program would affect undergraduate student experience and retention. For example, if GA lines are eliminated, how will course caps be reduced? How many faculty will MA program elimination free up to teach more courses with lower caps? What will new labor configurations look like? What will new caps be? What will be the real cost savings, if any, particularly if the department has to hire more part- or full-time faculty to make up for the loss of labor traditionally shouldered by GAs?

3. What consequences, positive or negative, would you foresee in elimination of the program?

As stated in several letters of opposition, elimination of the MA program would adversely affect both the quality of the BA program and the University's ability to recruit and retain high quality faculty. The ability of remaining faculty to obtain external funding may also be adversely impacted.

The graduate students are currently providing instruction and support in undergraduate classes. Eliminating the graduate program would therefore put more stress on an already dwindling faculty. Many of the classes are already at capacity, and so we are not sure how eliminating those staffed by graduate students would be beneficial to the department or to undergraduate students. Increasing class size may affect the quality of the BA program and significantly change the undergraduate academic experience—as stated by several former and current UW students.

4. What alternatives could be proposed in lieu of elimination?

There may be potential to increase enrollment in some of the core graduate classes offered by the department. For example, graduate students in other programs (e.g., Ph.D. in Marketing)

could feasibly take both the social research methods and statistics courses offered in the department to fulfill their degree requirements. Integrating more graduate education in this manner would benefit the entire University, especially in times of stressed teaching capacity.

There also may be some opportunities to share resources with other graduate programs by seeking other joint degrees that may broaden students' experiences. There are institutions that have joint Masters of Public Administration/Sociology programs. Some institutions also offer an Applied Statistics/Sociology graduate degree.

The main contributing factor to eliminate the program seems to be the low number of faculty. However, the department may be subject to further attrition given the elimination of the program. This would ultimately hurt the BA program they are trying to protect. We would suggest looking into increasing faculty lines, hiring adjuncts or looking into dual appointments with other departments. Hiring quality faculty would undoubtedly increase the attractiveness of the graduate program and increase enrollment rates. We understand that this may not be possible in the short-term and may not be consistent with the College's strategic plan, which is why we would suggest a grace period and re-evaluation.

5. What is your recommendation regarding elimination of the program?

This program seems to have been greatly impacted by low GA resources and other constraints that make recruiting difficult. It very well might be that the mid-level demand is due to these factors and not the number of faculty or demand for the program. Perhaps a bench-marking study could compare the number of graduates and job placements with peer institutions to fully understand the performance of this program.

We recommend re-evaluating the program after additional information is collected. At this time, we do not have enough information to make an informed decision about this program.

PhD Statistics

1. What are the strengths, merits, and/or benefits of the elimination proposal?

According to the UW Regulation 6-43, the elimination of an academic program is supposed to be based primarily upon educational considerations or financial exigency (UW Regulation 6-41). The PhD Statistics elimination proposal has merits when only the educational considerations are taken into account. For the past five years, the number of Doctoral students enrolled each year in the Statistics department is either one or two, indicating it is not a significant Doctoral degree-granting department. Eliminating the doctoral program and merging the Statistics department with the Mathematics Department may allow and motivate the faculty to focus on Data Analytics, which is a hot research area with significant potential to attract research funding and graduate enrollment.

2. What are the costs or weaknesses of the proposal?

The doctoral program elimination does not propose any reduction in faculty or staff and would therefore not generate meaningful cost savings.

3. What consequences, positive or negative, would you foresee in the elimination of the program?

Typically when doctoral programs are eliminated, research-active faculty tend towards finding new jobs with access to doctoral students to serve as research assistants. Losing research active faculty in the Statistics department could have negative consequences, not only to the home department but also to the wider UW community.

4. What alternatives could be proposed in lieu of elimination?

Two options can be offered in lieu of elimination. The first option has been suggested by the Head of the department which is suspending the Doctoral program for a few years and reviving the program at an appropriate time. The second option is based on the proposed merger of the Statistics department with the Mathematics department. A new doctoral program focusing in the area of Data Analytics would be useful to both the faculty and students in various departments like Computer Science, Mathematics, Engineering to mention a few.

5. What is your recommendation regarding elimination of the program?

Even though the Statistics and Mathematics departments are going to be merged, the Statistics PhD is very applied, while PhD in Mathematics appears more theoretical. This important difference in the nature of these two PhD programs makes the PhD program in Mathematics unsuitable for a Statistics graduate student – thus it seems inappropriate to assume that Statistics faculty will continue to have meaningful access to PhD students simply through their affiliation with Mathematics. However, the merger with Mathematics, along with the potential to re-focus the statistics PhD towards emerging topics (e.g., data analytics and “big data” modeling) suggest promise for re-invigorating this program. Since it is generally easier to re-tool a degree program than to create a new one, ***we recommend this decision be postponed while the faculty and College consider the potential of re-directing the program within the context of strategic planning.***

MS Neuroscience

1. What are the strengths, merits, and/or benefits of the elimination proposal?

According to the UW Regulation 6-43, the elimination of an academic program is supposed to be based primarily upon educational considerations or financial exigency (UW Regulation 6-41). Because the program under consideration is largely cost and effort neutral and offers some educational benefit (see below), the elimination proposal is not particularly strong. Convenience in terms of streamlining the University's offerings portfolio is perhaps its only benefit.

2. What are the costs or weaknesses of the proposal?

Elimination of the program will be cost-neutral and therefore does not address financial exigency. It is true that the Neuroscience MS program is considered "inactive" in that it no longer accepts students directly into the program; however, it still serves a fundamentally important role in allowing students in good standing, to graduate with an advanced degree in lieu of the terminal PhD in Neuroscience. The rather long amount of time it takes to acquire a life science PhD (on average 5-7 years) means more time for adversity to strike. Without such an option, good students who deserve an MS degree can effectively spend up to five years working toward a degree without anything to show for it.

3. What consequences, positive or negative, would you foresee in the elimination of the program?

As the program is run at no-cost to the University, there is no positive consequence of its elimination in the context of University finances. In terms of educational merits, the program serves as a means to reward deserving students who, for reasons often beyond their control, are unable to meet the requirements of the terminal PhD degree. This option is important for Ph.D. programs in which the conferment of an M.S. is not a requisite or obligatory stepping stone (several programs on campus also offer an MS degree, in part, to satisfy this niche). If it is eliminated, such students would have no such option, and if faced with unfortunate circumstances, would have to opt out of the program having wasted a significant amount of time that could have otherwise been spent more effectively advancing their careers. Students in many PhD programs take solace in knowing that an opt-out option exists. As such, its elimination might adversely affect current student performance/attitude as well as the number of program applicants in the future.

4. What alternatives could be proposed in lieu of elimination?

An alternative presented in the elimination proposal would allow Neuroscience PhD students in good standing who choose to opt out to be assimilated in the MS program offered by the Zoo/Phys department. Solid arguments against this option (voiced by its Director, Dr. Bill Flynn) indicate that this is not a viable course of action as (i) prerequisites for the Neuroscience Program and the Zoo/Phys programs differ, (ii) the Zoo/Phys department would be unduly burdened with the affairs of an autonomous interdisciplinary program, and (iii) the Zoo/Phys department will not be able to accommodate interdisciplinary MS students with research interests that fall outside of its traditional purview.

If the University sees a strong need in streamlining its offerings, even at the expense of those that offer some benefit and are cost-neutral, then perhaps a "universal" science masters with

program specific emphases could be considered. Any science department on campus with inactive masters programs could use this more centralized option to offer an MS option for appropriately deserving students.

Alternatively, the neuroscience program could consider explicitly granting its MS degree for students en-route to a PhD. Thus the MS would serve as a milestone rather than a “fallback.” Such an approach may be unconventional within neuroscience programs; however, the approach is used by other programs at UW (e.g., Psychology).

5. What is your recommendation regarding elimination of the program?

The strength of the elimination proposal is significantly undermined by the fact that the Neuroscience MS program is cost-neutral yet still confers benefit to the University and its students. Furthermore, the program’s elimination would likely come with consequences as it might negatively affect students currently enrolled in the Neuroscience PhD program and ultimately adversely affect future enrollment in that program. Alternative proposals to simply meld the Neuroscience MS with the Zoo/Phys Department’s MS offering are ill conceived (as described above). Based on this assessment, ***we recommend maintaining the MS in Neuroscience.***