

## CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, HAYWARD

Designation Code: 2003-04 **CAPR 3**

Date Submitted: May 6, 2004

TO: The Academic Senate

FROM: Committee on Academic Planning & Review (CAPR)

SUBJECT: Special Major Program Five-Year Review

PURPOSE: For Approval by the Academic Senate

ACTION  
REQUESTED: Approval of the Five-Year Program Review of the Special Major Program and continuation of the program without modification

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### **I. Background**

#### **Overview description of the program**

The regular review period for the Special Major Program is 1998-2003. The last review of the Program was conducted during the 1997-1998 academic year.

The Special Major Program consists of four programs: BA, MA, BS, and MS. The purpose of the Special Major Program is to provide the students with the opportunity to develop their own interdisciplinary programs by utilizing the existing courses and faculty expertise already available on campus. This need arises when the regular curricular offerings of the University do not meet specific student needs. The topics of study in the Special Major Program are proposed by the students who are interested in the Program and reviewed and approved by a Committee of faculty members nominated by the students. A Special Major is only appropriate when the proposed topic is worthy in scope and depth of an undergraduate or graduate degree, the topic is sufficiently different from an existing degree, there are faculty with appropriate expertise willing to serve on a Special Major committee, and there are sufficient existing courses available for the student to take.

There is no curriculum common to all students in the major, no faculty members are assigned to the program, and students cannot declare a Special Major until their program has been approved. Special Majors are by definition interdisciplinary, and each Special Major must have a three-member faculty committee, consisting of faculty members from at least two different departments. The faculty committee approves the curriculum for each Special Major, and sends it to the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs and Graduate Studies for final approval. The Office of Academic Programs and Graduate Studies is the sponsoring unit, providing staff support that is normally provided by the regular department offices for the regular programs. The Associate Vice President and his staff oversee the proper day-to-day functioning of the Special Major Program,

including data recording and analysis, student service and surveys, and program quality control.

## **Overview of the documents submitted to CAPR**

To comply with CAPR's Policies and Procedures for Five Year Reviews and Plans (00-01 CAPR 7), the Special Major Program submitted to CAPR the four required documents: 1) a comprehensive Self-Study, 2) a plan for the development of the program for the next five years, 3) the Outside Reviewer's Report, and 4) the program's response to the Outside Reviewer's Report. The Self-Study presented a) an overview of the Self Study, b) a summary of the last Five-Year Review and Plan, its implementation, and the remaining issues, c) ) a summary of the Department's Program Assessment, d) academic performance review statistics of its graduate and undergraduate programs with tables, d) a comparison between the Special Major Program at CSUH and comparable programs in the CSU system, and g) a summary of achievements of the Program since the last review.

## **II. Five-Year Program Review/Self-Study (1998-2003)**

### **Summary of specific areas of the Self Study**

**Overview** Overview of the Program is described earlier in the Background Overview under Section I of this report.

**Last Five-Year Plan** There were no changes in the policies for the undergraduate or graduate Special Majors during the 1998-2003 review period. Since the Special Major Degree is an individualized course of study drawn from existing university courses, there were no plans developed for the degree in the last program review.

There was an organizational change during the 1998-2003 review period. Before 2001, the Associate Vice President of Curriculum and Academic Programs coordinated the BA/BS Special Majors and the Dean of Graduate Programs coordinated the MA/MS Special Majors. In 2001, the Office of Curriculum and Academic Programs and the Office of Graduate Programs were merged into the Office of Academic Programs and Graduate Studies. Since then, the BA/BS and MA/MS in Special Majors are all coordinated by the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs and Graduate Studies.

During the 1992-1998 review period, three changes were instituted for the undergraduate Special Majors: 1) the required GPA was increased from 2.0 to 2.3, 2) faculty committees were required to meet face-to-face with the students, and 3) the minimum number of total units uncompleted before a student declares a Special Major was increased from 45 to 60. In 1999, AVP Leigh Mintz reported that the Special Majors decreased by 10% to 15%, probably due to the change of the GPA and total remaining units requirements. The face-to-face meeting requirement was often ignored. Two changes were instituted for the graduate Special Majors: 1) the required GPA was increased from 2.5 to 2.7, and 2) the faculty committees were required to meet face-to-face with the student. Similar to the undergraduate Special Majors, the face-to-face meeting requirement was often ignored.

**Tenure Track Position Applications** Not applicable, since the Program has no faculty.

**Summary of Outcomes Assessment** Since each Special Major is a unique one-time-occurring major, the Program has not developed outcomes assessment plans. But the Program is planning to develop outcomes assessment plans for individual Special Majors during the next 5-Year-Review period. Currently, the only indications of the outcomes quality are reflected in the student program-exit survey and participating faculty survey. In general, the results of both surveys are positive, being satisfied with and recognizing the importance and value of the Program. Faculty views on the quality control of the Program seem to be mixed.

**Academic Performance Review Statistics** The Program has no data on FTES, FTEF, and SFR, since the Program does not have its own courses or faculty. Undergraduate Special Majors declined from 81 during the 1991-1998 period to 27 during the 1998-2003 period. Graduate Special Majors decline from 72 to 36 during the comparable periods. The number of graduated undergraduate and graduate Special Majors during the same period also declined, in line with the decline in enrollments. Given the special nature of the Program, the decline is not viewed as a problem or source of concern, since there are no faculty members in the Program. Forensic Science is the most popular subject for undergraduate Special Majors (6 out of 28), leading several faculty members into consideration of proposing it as a new degree at CSUH.

**Comparable Programs in Other Universities** The Special Major Program at CSUH is quite similar to the Special Major programs at five other CSU campuses. However, the GPA requirement is higher at these campuses, ranging from 2.5 to 3.0, as compared with 2.3 at CSUH for the undergraduates. For the graduates, other campuses require 3.0, as compared to 2.7 at CSUH.

**Program Achievements Since the Last Review** Approved by the Academic Senate in 2002-2003, the total units for the BA and BS degrees will be changed from 186 to 180 in line with the Chancellor's Office policy. The required major units in BS increased from 54-93 to 54-102.

**Justification for Over 180 Units** The BA and BS degrees in Special Major will be 180 units starting from Fall 2004. Current students are allowed to graduate with 180 units on a case-by-case basis.

### **III. Program's Five-Year Strategic Plan**

Since the student exit survey and the faculty survey show very positive results, there is little indication for major changes. However, the Program aims to accomplish the following:

- Require three to four learning outcomes for each individual Special Major as part of the proposal to be approved.
- Change the name of the BA/BS and MA/MS in Special Major to Interdisciplinary Studies.
- Increase the minimum undergraduate GPA from 2.7 to 3.0 as the requirement for a graduate Special Major.
- Continue to administer an exit survey to each graduate and a faculty survey every five years as part of the quality control.
- Continue with the current administrative practices of the Special Major Program.

### **IV. Outside Reviewer's Comments & The Program's Response**

Provost Frank Martino and Associate Vice President Carl Bellone both agreed that having an outside reviewer for the Special Majors was not appropriate, since the Program primarily consists of just policies and procedures, and there are no faculty in the Program and there is no set program to review. Consequently, both agreed to send the policies and procedures documents to the appropriate administrators at San Francisco State, San Jose State, and Sonoma State Universities for their comments, in lieu of outside reviewer's review.

Only one person, Daniel H. Buttlair, Dean of Undergraduate Studies at San Francisco State University responded. Dean Buttlair comments that the Special Major Program is very similar to that at San Francisco State University. He views the Program policies and procedures positively and considers the Program as "very solid".

Dean Buttlair suggests that the Program requires a specific range of units from each of the involved departments to guarantee interdisciplinarity. However, the Program considers that policy as too restrictive. The program decides to maintain the current requirement to allow adequate flexibility for faculty committee and the student.

## **V. CAPR's Analysis of the Program's Five-Year Review**

Associate Vice President Carl Bellone attended the CAPR meetings on 3/4/2004 and 4/1/2004 to present the Review and answer CAPR members' questions. At the request of CAPR, AVP Bellone forwarded some sample approval forms of the Special Majors to help CAPR members understand the procedures of the Special Majors.

### **The Document Format**

CAPR commends the Special Major Program for its effort in conforming to the review format as specified in CAPR-07 and its provision of supplemental materials to facilitate a good understanding of this program that is different from conventional programs.

### **The Five-Year Review**

CAPR recognizes the conscientious efforts made by the program to maintain a solid set of policies and procedures to keep the quality of the program. CAPR appreciates the administration of the student exit surveys and faculty survey for quality monitoring. CAPR commends the program's efforts in constantly updating the policies and procedures to improve the program. CAPR is pleased to note that some new possibilities might emerge from the program. CAPR regards the program's plan to change the name of the program into Interdisciplinary Studies as consistent with the University's goal to promote interdisciplinary connections and development.

However, CAPR is quite concerned about the quality control procedures of the program. Some important policies, such as the face-to-face consultation requirement, are not observed, and the program does not seem to have any way to enforce the policy. Although each major is approved by the program, no specification of learning goals and outcomes is made in the proposal. CAPR considers this as a serious issue that demands the program's immediate attention. CAPR is also concerned about the practice of using administrators' comments on policies and procedures from other universities in lieu of the external reviewer's report. CAPR strongly recommends that the program seeks the external review from a person with experience in interdisciplinary studies and/or

assessment of student learning outcomes.

CAPR is pleased to note that the program is planning to require outcome assessment for each Special Major proposal. CAPR recommends that the program also specify the procedures and parties accountable for upholding the quality of learning. CAPR is also happy to note that AVP Bellone agrees to consider seriously the possibility of inviting an external reviewer for the next round of Five-Year-Review.

**VI. CAPR Recommendation for Continuation of the Program**

CAPR voted unanimously to continue the program without modification.

**VII. Date of the Program's Next Five-Year Review**

2008-2009