Fairfield University
Educational Planning Committee
Draft Minutes
September 18, 2008

Committee Members in Attendance: Peter Bayers, Susan Franzosa, Cathy Giapponi, Wendy Kohli, Shelley Phelan, Sallyanne Ryan, Carl Scheraga (chair, re-elected), Joyce Shea, Emily Smith, Jo Yarrington.

Invited Guests: Dina Franceschi (Economics; Advisory Board, Program on the Environment) and David Downie (Director, Program on the Environment).

1. Professor Scheraga called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m.

2. Welcome: Professor Scheraga welcomed all new members to the EPC, emphasizing the committee’s high level of productivity and collegiality.

   Professor Kohli noted that while she serves as an at-large member of the EPC, her GSEAP colleague, Professor Smith serves as a representative of the Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions (GSEAP). Thus, when Professor Smith completes her term at the close of the current AY, her seat on the committee must be filled by a member of the GSEAP faculty.

3. Election of Chairperson: Professor Scheraga, in his role as past chair of the EPC, called for nominations for the ’08-'09 chair. Professor Bayers nominated Professor Scheraga; Professor Shea seconded. Professor Scheraga was re-elected chairperson by acclamation. Professor Smith thanked Professor Scheraga for his fine service as committee chair over the past year, and all expressed appreciation for his willingness to serve again.

4. Discussion of the proposal for a single Program on the Environment, submitted by the Environmental Studies Advisory Board (ESAB): Professor Scheraga invited Professors Franceschi and Downie to join the meeting, welcoming both and introducing Professor Franceschi as co-director, Environmental Studies and Professor Downie as the newly appointed director of the Program on the Environment.

   Professor Franceschi provided an overview of the specified proposal, explaining that former CAS Dean T. Snyder and former CAS Associate Dean/Interim Dean R. Poincelot initiated the process of combining the three “environment-related” programs (Environmental Studies, Marine Science, and Environmental Science) two years ago. The proposed single program represents an interdisciplinary effort to offer students a substantive program of study on the environment that draws upon the strength of the previously distinct programs and
combines resources in a manner that improves overall programmatic support. Professor Franceschi reminded the committee that, on September 9, 2008, the UCC approved its May 6, 2008 minutes, thereby endorsing the following:

(a) Proposed revisions to the Environmental Studies curriculum and adoption of the new name, Program on the Environment;

(b) Proposed elimination of the Environmental Science program (Professor Franceschi also reminded the EPC that both the founding director of the Environmental Science program, R. Poincelet, and the director of record, D. Brousseau supported this proposal—see ESAB proposal for letters of support.);

(c) Proposed elimination of the Marine Science program and reestablishment of the Marine Science Concentration within the Biology Department (Again, Professor Franceschi reminded the EPC that the founding director of the Marine Science program, D. Brousseau supported this proposal—see ESAB proposal for letter of support.).

Professor Downie added that more full-time faculty are now involved in developing/offering coursework on the environment; budgetary support exists; and, the proposed Program on the Environment reduces curricular confusion for students interested in studying environmental issues. He also applauded all those involved with establishing the proposed Program on the Environment, particularly the former co-directors of Environmental Studies, D. Franceschi and T. Osier, suggesting that the proposed curricular revisions reflect current practices in environmental education at other competitive institutions.

Professor Scheraga opened the floor to discussion, and Professor Yarrington asked Professor Downie to explain expectations for the required capstone course. He described the capstone course as an “integrative experience” for students in the Program on the Environment and reviewed a variety of options. He envisions the required capstone course as an “environmental workshop” that emphasizes scientific research while maintaining an “applied dimension.” Some students may opt to do an environmental internship; others (particularly those interested in graduate studies) may conduct substantive independent study. Professor Downie suggests that all students in the capstone course produce a similar final product such as a substantial research-based paper. Professor Yarrington endorsed the notion of choice/varied options available to students in completing the capstone course.

Professor Kohli commented on the “thoroughness” of the proposal and recognized Professors Franceschi and Osier for their “impressive” work in developing a program that places all involved “in win-win situations.”

Professor Giapponi also complimented the ESAB on its proposal, highlighting the specification that “foundation courses” contain more than 80% environmental content and “elective courses” contain at least 50% environmental content.

Professor Smith, calling the proposal “nice to read”, endorsed the variety of capstone options available to students and asked if students could opt to complete more than one capstone course. Professor Downie responded that students could take a second capstone course as an “elective” course. Professor Smith asked
Professor Downie to discuss the “advocacy-based”/”mission-driven” aspect of the required capstone experience, and he explained that “problem-solving”, not advocacy per se, was the key issue. Students in the Program on the Environment are expected to learn how to identify environmental problems and pose viable solutions; an intense research option must be available for those interested in pursuing graduate studies. Professor Franceschi added that many courses in the curriculum included advocacy-based experiences, explaining that such work would be important for students interested in solving humanitarian crises produced by environmental disasters.

Professor Yarrington asked about assessment procedures for the Program. While Professor Franceschi indicated that such procedures were still being developed/finalized, Professor Downie reported that the CAS Dean recently informed program directors that a “schedule of program reviews” was forthcoming.

Professors Scheraga and Giapponi indicated that students majoring in Management (DSB), particularly those in the Business & Society track, should be encouraged to pursue the proposed minor on the environment. A common theme in many annual reports these days is environmental sustainability. Professors Franceschi and Downie welcomed Professor Scheraga’s offer to introduce the Program on the Environment to colleagues at an upcoming department meeting.

Given no further questions from the EPC, Professor Scheraga thanked Professors Franceschi and Downie for their time/effort. Professor Downie, anticipating much success with the Program, expressed his gratitude to Professors Franceschi and Osier for their fine work in developing it over the past couple years.

Following Professors Franceschi and Downie’s exit, Professor Scheraga asked for committee comments. The general sense was that the ESAB produced a “great proposal” and the Program on the Environment is a “fine example of interdisciplinary work.” Dean Franzosa asked whether state review/approval was necessary; Professor Scheraga offered to clarify this matter with Associate AVP Mary Frances Malone (our representative to the state board) before the Academic Council reviews the proposal. [Note: Professor Scheraga reported to the EPC, via e-mail on September 22, 2008, that the Associate AVP confirmed that state review/approval was not necessary because the Program on the Environment is a minor, not a major.] Dean Franzosa also commented that more details on program assessment would strengthen the proposal and would be needed if it had to be reviewed by the State. While many agreed, Professor Kohli pointed out that the proposal was prepared according to JOR Guidelines and that she didn’t think the JOR Guidelines asked for information on assessment. (A subsequent check of the JOR did reveal an assessment item in the guidelines.) Professor Scheraga stated he would ask Academic Council to review the JOR Guidelines, and Professor Phelan suggested that Academic Council might ask ESAB to provide more information on assessment. Professor Yarrington then called the question, Professor Kohli seconded, and all voted in favor.
Committee Vote: Professor Kohli moved to approve the proposed Program on the Environment [thereby (a) revising the requirements of the Environmental Studies minor, (b) eliminating the Environmental Science program, and (c) eliminating the Marine Science minor/reestablishing Marine Science as a Concentration in the Biology Department.]; Professor Giapponi seconded the motion, and all voted in favor to approve the proposed Program on the Environment.

5. New Business: Professor Scheraga announced that representatives of the Math Department and the School of Engineering would be addressing the EPC at its next meeting. They will report on the status of their efforts to sustain/grow the Computer Science Program. Professor Scheraga offered to distribute all pertinent documents from the EPC’s past deliberations on this issue to the membership. Dean Franzosa asked for clarification on the EPC’s role in this matter. Professor Scheraga explained that the EPC aims to determine whether or not the two parties are making satisfactory progress, emphasizing that the Academic Vice President (Orin Grossman) first sought the EPC’s advice on this matter last year. He reminded the members that their role is advisory; ultimately, all decisions regarding the future residency of the Computer Science Program are made by the AVP. Professor Yarrington announced that she is serving on the search committee for the next AVP, and she welcomed the opportunity to discuss such practices with the AVP candidates, that is, the role of the EPC in shared governance and its ability to provide feedback to the Academic Vice President.

6. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn made by Professor Shea, seconded by Professor Giapponi. The meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by M. Sallyanne Ryan