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To: David Thorud
Acting Provost

From: Gail L. Dubrow
Associate Dean for Academic Programs

Re: Law, Societies, and Justice Program and CLASS Center Review

Summary and Recommended Action

At its meeting of May 20, 2004, the Graduate School Council met with members of the team reviewing the Law, Societies, and Justice Program and CLASS Center; with the Director and several program faculty; and with the Divisional Dean for the Social Sciences from the College of Arts and Sciences. The Council recommended continuation of the Law, Societies, and Justice degree program and CLASS Center, with the next review in 5 years. This UIF-funded program has gathered an exceptional group of faculty that attracts outstanding students. It is a true interdisciplinary program that reaches out to other units and enriches the intellectual environment on campus, providing students and faculty with a qualitatively different academic experience than they would find in any single discipline. The Program currently lies at a critical juncture in its development. An additional investment of resources is needed and deserved in light of its record of success, both to solidify the foundation it has built and continue its positive trajectory.

I concur with the Council's recommendations and comments.

Background

The Law, Societies, and Justice (LSJ) program offers a Bachelor of Arts degree. The Program, which was established in 2000 with funding from the University Initiatives Fund, states that its goal is to provide students with "an interdisciplinary liberal arts education regarding the unique forms of social control, institutionalized disputing, and justice commonly identified with law or legality." The 2000 UIF grant supported the hiring of two new LSJ faculty members with joint appointments, as well as two half-time staff members. The College funded a third joint LSJ faculty member, and three more have 50% appointments in LSJ. All six core faculty members have 50% appointments in the Program, while another half dozen faculty in other units have become actively connected to LSJ. The Program formally began in the 2002-2003 academic

year. It currently has about 100 undergraduate majors, with approximately 70 students graduating per year.

Review Process

The review committee included five members, three internal and two from peer institutions. The committee was chaired by Charles Keyes, Professor in Anthropology and International Studies, and included as the other internal members Jere Bacharach, Professor in History, and Marieka Klawitter, Associate Professor in Public Affairs. The external members of the committee included Lynn Mather, Professor of Law and Political Science at the State University of New York, and Austin Sarat, Professor of Political Science and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought at Amherst College. They carried out the review during winter quarter 2004, including a review of the self-study, preliminary meetings with faculty and administrators, and a two day site visit on February 23-24, when they met with faculty, students, and staff.

Review Findings

The review team found that LSJ is a leading national model of interdisciplinary law-related education for undergraduates. They found its version of interdisciplinary legal study to be integrated and coherent, with a genuine commitment to comparative and global studies. In its depth and breadth, it is a unique program nationally. The director's tireless work, generosity, and intellectual force have driven the creation of an outstanding program in a relatively short time. The review committee praised him for inspiring the Program and playing a major role in recruiting and nurturing the development of an impressive faculty. The committee suggested specific changes to the undergraduate curriculum, some of which the Program has already begun to address, so that it builds progressively on what students have already learned and effectively structures the Program's course offerings. The reviewers found that LSJ is best situated in its present location within the College of Arts and Sciences, as opposed to other potential homes within the University, such as the Law School, International Studies, or Political Science. The Program should formalize existing ties and extend its connections to other relevant units in the years to come to ensure that LSJ's vitality is continuously renewed.

Council Recommendations

The Council considered several challenges the Program still faces. In the reviewers' judgment, a wider range of faculty need to participate in shaping the Program's development by constructing a shared vision for the future and building a next generation of leadership for LSJ. This requires the participation of all faculty in governance and decision making, as well as in curriculum development. Collective participation in this process will align the interests and strengths of the faculty with the vision of the Program as a whole. In both of these areas – faculty governance and curricular development – LSJ should work to formalize its policies and practices.

As it is currently structured, the Program is almost wholly an undergraduate one. The Council recognizes the intellectual vision and capacity of the Program to develop a graduate certificate in the near future, and beyond that, perhaps a graduate degree program. Nonetheless, there is some reluctance to encourage movement in a direction where, no matter how high its quality, there is limited hope for the necessary budgetary support. For that reason, the Council encourages the development of a graduate certificate as an incremental step into the arena of graduate education.

Although many units build a case for increased resources in their self-studies, exceedingly few succeed in persuading the Graduate Council to join in their call. The Self-Study, Report of the

Review Committee, and findings of the Graduate School, however, are consistent in their conclusion that LSJ has both succeeded in achieving the objectives of its original UIF proposal and has outgrown its budget. Increased staff support and a reevaluation of its operating budget are needed to effectively retain junior faculty, preserve the high quality of the program, and advance its trajectory. This investment would help to fund the work that the rising generation of leaders needs to do in developing a viable proposal for a graduate program. Once this has been accomplished, further investment in the Law, Society and Justice Program may be needed.

The success of this intellectually innovative program is to be commended.

cc: Lee Huntsman, President
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