

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE



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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92521-0132

May 1, 2020

TO: Dylan Rodriguez, Chair
Academic Senate

FROM: Lucille Chia, Chair *Lucille Chia*
CHASS Executive Committee

RE: School of Business Plan for a Four-Year Business Administration Major Response

We are grateful for the opportunity to reply to the latest round of discussion on the merits of the proposal from the School of Business to discontinue the 2-year Pre-Business major housed in CHASS and to initiate a 4-year Business Administration major housed in the School of Business. We appreciate the time and effort the various committees and working groups have contributed to this discussion.

The Executive Committee of the School of Business, in a memo dated December 17, 2019, makes a case for the change. We read the memo as arguing that the change would lead to improvements in four areas:

1. Recruitment and admission of first-year students.
2. Academic advising for students, from the first year through graduation.
3. The overall student experience, especially extra-curricular activities.
4. Career preparation, again focused on extra-curricular activities.

On February 11, 2019, a CHASS Ad-Hoc Committee report to the Senate raised a number of concerns. We are grateful for the replies provided by the School of Business. We wish to reiterate and elaborate on the following concerns:

1. The last available external review of the existing structure did not actually recommend a 4-year program; the report simply described options. As is, there is no third-party recommendation supporting the change. Nor is there a third-party arguing against the change. Given the scope of the change, a third-party recommendation would assist the Senate when deliberating on whether to go forward with the change.
2. The advantages the School of Business cites seek to add-value to students who begin as first-year Business students and remain during their time at UCR as Business Administration students.

That is laudable. However, many students do not remain in the major. That is often for academic reasons. That is, the students do not make satisfactory progress in the required lower-division core courses in the major are then required to change to a different major within UCR to remain at UCR. The existing structure with a two-year Pre-Business program in CHASS is designed to help those students transition to another major within CHASS. That, in fact, is a part of the bread and butter of the CHASS College Academic Advising office, as students regularly transition from Pre-Business to a CHASS major. The School of Business, on the other hand, has little to no experience working with first and second year students who do not meet academic requirements in their initial chosen major, or in advising students to discover new majors. Removing a large number of students, quarter after quarter, would be an entirely new experience. Transitioning them out of their College into another College would be a new experience.

So suppose the change occurs. There will then still be a high number of students that School of Business will discontinue. These students will then be sent to CHASS for advising on finding a new major. In the higher-education literature, this is referred to as “dumping” students who fail out of one college on a campus onto another college on the campus. Students who do not know CHASS advisors but only School of Business advisors, and have spent two years “identifying” as School of Business major (instead of two-year as a CHASS major), will face challenges in successfully navigating this change.

The School of Business argues that by making the change, students who remain in the School of Business will have a better experience, for they will have had four years in the School of Business, with four years of School of Business advising, extra-curricular programming, and so on. In short, they aim to “add-value” to the more committed, academically more successful students.

CHASS’s concern is that this change will make things worse for the less committed or less academically successful students. This would threaten overall lower retention and graduation rates. We fear this change, though it may make things better in various ways for the academically more successful student who would remain in the School of Business, will not add-value for the less academically successful student, but might make things worse.

3. CHASS is concerned about the possible professionalization of lower-division education, e.g. creating “Business Math,” “Business English,” and so on, taught by Business faculty and lecturers, as the School of Business has created “Business Ethics” (as an alternative to Business Ethics taught by Philosophy) in the past. We understand that the proposal from the School of Business includes no intentions to change the curriculum, add courses, and so on, but rather intends to add extra-curricular programming and advising. CHASS is also concerned about the possible drive to eliminate Administrative Studies as a joint major within CHASS (e.g. Art/History Administrative Studies).
4. CHASS also wonders whether one of the arguments for the change should persuade. The School of Business argues that all of the local California State University campuses have four-year Business majors. As a recruiting argument, this might be persuasive with considerable, and not just anecdotal, evidence. As far as we know, there is no such evidence. Furthermore, as a part of an argument for the change based on aspirations towards excellence, the argument does not convince, for some of the very best undergraduate programs at highly ranked universities, including UC Berkeley, are two-year programs, with strong extra-curricular programming, programming provided, we would imagine, by Colleges, Schools and campus offices in collaboration.

In light of these concerns, the CHASS Executive Committee, through the Academic Senate, requests the following:

1. The Office of the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education, in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research, for comprehensive evidence on the likely impact on retention and graduation rates for students who would be discontinued under the proposed change. Given the amount of information on the performance of students in various majors in various GPA bands after admission, we believe it should be possible for the campus to provide objective and probative information on the likely impact of the change.
2. As it stands, there are two proposals on the table. The first is the status quo. The second is the change to a four-year program in the School of Business Administration. A third option would keep the two-year Pre-Business major in CHASS, but would significantly improve cooperative extra-curricular programming between CHASS and the School of Business. But we are not aware of what kinds of cooperative programs are possible. We thereby request for the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education to research and provide information regarding the existence of undergraduate business programs that involve extensive cross-college cooperation in various ways, including curriculum, advising, recruitment, enrichment activities, etc. The Senate should have further information, from a third-party source, on the costs and benefits of (a) keeping the status quo, (b) changing to the School of Business proposal, or (c) adding value through enhanced programming and cooperation between the School of Business, CHASS, and possibly also the Office of Undergraduate Education.
3. Relatedly, the CHASS Executive Committee is not fully aware of what further programming could be made available by CHASS. We thereby request for the CHASS Dean's Office to make a comprehensive proposal for additional "value-added" programming that would facilitate the kinds of programming that the School of Business sees as valuable, but could be created through a more cooperative program between the two colleges.

In sum, given the opportunities to add-value to students who persist in Business Administration, but the potential costs to students who do not persist if the proposed change is made, we believe the Senate, in its deliberations, should not simply choose between the proposal and the status quo, but should be provided more information about the likely effects, and should also have a third-option under review.

Finally, we wish to note two late additional points, related to closure of the campus due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. First, since all classes are currently being taught "remotely," it would be useful and important to get detailed information on the courses taught that are offered for both the BSAD major and the Administrative Studies program (even though they had not been previously taught online, as noted in the "2020-2025 Five Year Plan", bottom of p. 4).

Second, we propose that consideration for the proposal of a four-year BSAD major be postponed during this period when the campus is closed and we are engaged in remote teaching and student advising, and since new hires of instructor and academic advisors are presumably on hold (this being an important part of the proposal). This year and possibly next year is not the time to decide on whether or not to launch a new program that demands substantial new instructional and administrative personnel.