COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

From: Susan Stephens, Chair,
Committee for the Review of Undergraduate Majors

To: Ray Levitt, Chair,
XLV Senate of the Academic Council

Date: February 4, 2013

Re: Minor revision to SenD#6610

On October 19, 2012, the Committee for the Review of Undergraduate Majors clarified the terms under which Interdisciplinary Honors Programs must be reviewed.

Attached is the revised version of SenD#6610 passed by the committee on October 19, 2012. (The revision is on page 4, and is underlined.)

The Committee for the Review of Undergraduate Majors recommends the revision to SenD#6610 to clarify the terms under which Interdisciplinary Honors Programs must be reviewed.
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Interdisciplinary programs (IDPs) are degree-granting programs that meet the academic needs and interests of students and faculty not served by the degree options offered by our regular academic departments. These programs have played an important role in both undergraduate and graduate education at Stanford. In addition, these programs facilitate the interaction of faculty with common research and teaching interests in different departments. They enhance Stanford’s appeal to high-quality students and faculty, and they enrich our overall academic enterprise.

A document outlining the procedures for initiation, renewal, and termination of IDPs, and also describing the information needed for renewal, was adopted by the Senate in February 1994 (SenD4255). Since that time the document has not been revised despite structural changes in the Senate committees that affect the IDP review process (e.g., the splitting of C-US into C-USP and C-RUM), and an inevitable shift in the type of information available for, and required to, perform an adequate program evaluation. These differences between the Senate document and actual practice have, at times, led to confusion for programs undergoing the review process. In addition, one aspect of the procedures for termination of an IDP was found to be open to at least two different interpretations, and therefore requires clarification.

Starting from the prior document (SenD4255), the recommendations herein were developed in order to update the documentation and procedures, and to correct ambiguities or inconsistencies encountered in practice. This document supersedes SenD4255 and also SenD3517—a document in force prior to SenD4255 that prescribed the format for a “Summary Preface to Program Reviews” that had not been explicitly superseded (and therefore conflicted with SenD4255). ¹

¹ It is our intent that the procedures and guidelines established in this document supersede any and all other documents or decisions previously taken on these matters by the Faculty Senate.
In order to permit these guidelines to remain viable despite natural changes in the information available for review, or natural changes in review emphasis, the document has been restructured to consist of core text and appendices. The core text describes the procedures to be used in conjunction with the initiation, renewal, and termination of IDPs, and it expresses the scope and spirit of the IDP renewal process. The appendices outline the specific information sought during renewal and a listing of questions to be addressed in the self-study report. Since this latter information has been found to evolve more rapidly than the basic procedures outlined in the core of this document, we ask the Senate to authorize C-RUM and C-GS to maintain and update these appendices as needed—without the necessity to return to the Senate for explicit authorization—so long as they continue to reflect the spirit and scope outlined in the body of this document. Our hope is that this will result in a document that can be transmitted to the programs undergoing review that is clear, up-to-date, and fully relevant to both their needs in performing the self-study and the Senate’s in evaluating programs for extension of degree-granting authority. In order to provide a permanent record of the appendices, and to allow for Senate inspection, we propose that any changes made to the appendices be transmitted to the Senate with the annual report of C-RUM and/or C-GS each year. (This would be accomplished by attaching a complete copy of the updated appendix or appendices, with any changes highlighted, to the annual report of C-RUM and/or C-GS.)

These recommendations were first developed by C-RUM in the fall of 2011 and transmitted to C-GS for their consideration at the end of that term. C-GS review and editing was conducted throughout the winter quarter, and an approved form of the document was returned to C-RUM for its consideration. Final discussion and approval of that document by C-RUM occurred at the end of winter quarter, with the intent that the document be jointly submitted to the Faculty Senate in the spring (of 2012). Assuming Senate approval, it is the intent of the committees that the recommendations listed herein be implemented starting in the fall of AY 2012-2013.
Guidelines for the Initiation, Renewal, and Termination of Interdisciplinary Programs

Interdisciplinary program (IDP) committees that wish to nominate students for degrees or confer honors require authorization by the Academic Senate, which has the sole authority to grant degrees and reserves the right to approve degree-nominating entities. The Senate grants nominating rights to academic departments without limit of time and to interdisciplinary programs led by a program committee appointed by a cognizant dean for an initial authorization period of five years and renewable terms of up to eight years. Graduate IDPs are normally renewed for up to five years.

Undergraduate interdisciplinary honors programs, also led by a program committee appointed by a cognizant dean, are separate from (and from the student's standpoint, incremental to) a regular major and do not lead to A.B., B.S., or B.A.S. degrees. Such programs require authorization by the Academic Senate on a five- or eight-year schedule.

Initial Authorization of an IDP

The Academic Senate grants to program committees initial authority to nominate for degrees or honors only after C-RUM or C-GS deliberation and recommendation. Applications for such status should be addressed by the cognizant dean to the chair of C-RUM or C-GS at least six months before the planned inauguration of the formal degree or honors program (usually with an effective start date at the beginning of the academic year following Senate approval). Proposals should include a discussion of the program's purpose, its structure, comparisons with programs at other universities, and the educational value of pursuing the particular subject in depth. The proposal should outline the curricular guidance given to students, indicating the steps by which a student can achieve an in-depth competence in the field, preferably via course/experiences structured sequentially—not simply an aggregate listing of possible courses. The proposal must also describe how advising will take place and how affiliated faculty will be integrated into the program. For graduate IDPs, the admissions criteria, target student population, and desired size of entering cohort, should be described.

Upon petition, C-RUM or C-GS will evaluate the proposed program's intellectual substance, coherence, and academic merit; its niche within the set of opportunities available to students; its long-term viability; its administrative structure, particularly for providing program planning, development, and renewal; advising for majors and prospective majors; the engagement of the departments involved; and the cognizant dean’s evaluation of its benefits, costs, and other impacts on the University and involved departments. Proposed degree programs must be clearly interdisciplinary in nature, while meeting the general University criteria for granting undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Specifically, this means that the proposed program will be evaluated with respect to the following criteria:

- The academic rigor and intellectual coherence of the core curriculum.
- The amount of interest and potential involvement of students.
- The degree to which it overlaps programs offered or potentially offered within departments or existing IDPs.
\begin{itemize}
  \item The level of support for the proposal by those departments that will have curricular and/or administrative connections with the new IDP.
  \item The proportion of classes to be taught by Academic Council members.
  \item The strength of the program’s administrative structure.
  \item The strength of the program’s advising structure.
\end{itemize}

In addition, C-RUM or C-GS will review potential positive and negative aspects of the proposal with respect to other existing IDPs and provide any feedback to the program/cognizant dean that might be helpful in identifying possible issues for the program.

**Renewal of IDP Degree and IDP Honors Programs**

Continued authorization of an IDP degree or IDP honors program is dependent upon continued intellectual vitality, the continued participation of qualified faculty and support of the departments involved, sufficient funding, and sustained student interest. Evidence of success in each of these categories is a necessary condition for continuation of a program. The determination of whether or not an IDP is recommended for renewal is made by (a) the cognizant dean, who weighs the educational benefits of a program against its resource requirements, and (b) C-RUM or C-GS, respectively, which review the overall quality of the program and the role it plays in the educational mission of the university. When a program is recommended for renewal by both the cognizant dean and C-RUM and/or C-GS, a request for renewal is sent to the Senate. Programs with both an undergraduate and graduate IDP must submit separate reports to the respective committee. The timing of renewal for undergraduate and graduate IDP degree programs may differ.

In preparation for a renewal of an existing program, information of a statistical or descriptive nature is collected from a number of sources, including the university administration, the cognizant dean’s office, and the program undergoing review. (See the appendices for a current listing of the information required.)\(^2\) The information collected is compiled by the program under review, verified for accuracy, and transmitted to the cognizant dean in addition to C-RUM and/or C-GS.

Using this information, and any additional information required, the faculty leadership of the program prepares a self-study document that addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the program in the form of a reflective essay. Questions of particular interest to C-RUM and C-GS that should be addressed are listed in the respective appendices of this document. Once completed, the self-study report is forwarded to both the cognizant dean and C-RUM and/or C-GS.

Also using this information, and any additional information required, the cognizant dean prepares a recommendation based on an impartial evaluation of the programmatic value/benefits of the IDP. The dean can either establish a faculty committee or use an existing curriculum review committee to assess whether the program meets the renewal criteria. The dean forwards his or her recommendation, and supporting documentation, to C-RUM and/or C-GS.

\(^2\) Since the appendices of this document are updated as needed, please consult the most recent Annual Report of C-RUM and/or C-GS to obtain an up-to-date listing.
C-RUM and/or C-GS may recommend unconditional approval, approval contingent on particular program changes, or discontinuation of the program. They may also request additional, independent information to assist in the review.

Upon concurrence by C-RUM and/or C-GS with the dean’s recommendation for renewal, a recommendation to renew the IDP is forwarded to the Senate.

**Termination of an IDP**

If the dean and the faculty of an existing program agree that the program should not be renewed, no proposal for renewal need be brought forward for Senate action, but C-RUM and/or C-GS should be notified of the decision. If the faculty of a program wish to seek renewal without support from the cognizant dean, or after engaging in a renewal evaluation, the dean's recommendation is to terminate the program, a request for renewal may still be brought forward by the faculty through C-RUM and/or C-GS. If C-RUM and/or C-GS concurs with the dean’s recommendation, the process is complete, and the program will be terminated. C-RUM and/or C-GS will hear any appeals. If the committee and the dean do not concur on a non-renewal recommendation, the case is forwarded to the Senate for resolution. All terminations of programs will be reported to the Senate in the annual report of C-RUM and/or C-GS.

If a program is not renewed, the dean notifies the chair of the program not to accept any new students as degree or honors candidates. Students who are already candidates for the degree or honors may complete the program and the program will not formally be closed until their degree and/or honors have been conferred. No program is permitted to admit new candidates or nominate candidates for the degree past the expiration date of the current approval period without Senate reauthorization. All students enrolled in programs that will be terminated must be given the option to complete the existing program, and may be given the option move to another degree program. Programs that are to be terminated must nonetheless provide information on how the directors plan to provide support and advice for each of the students remaining in the program through degree completion. In particular, arrangements must be made for students in doctoral IDPs who have not been advanced to candidacy.

In the case of an undergraduate who returns to Stanford into a degree program that is no longer offered, the student will be advised about alternative majors and honors programs, including options within special or individually designed programs. In the case of graduate students who request to reinstate into a degree program that is no longer offered, the student should apply for admission to a different program, taking into consideration how closely it approximates the program they were enrolled in. In reviewing the application, the program may take into consideration whether reinstatement into a similar program would be appropriate.

**Timing of IDP Renewals**

Since much of the renewal evaluation entails comparison with other Stanford programs, whenever possible, similar programs should be grouped and reviewed in the same year.

Continuation of the authorization to nominate for degrees or honors depends upon a timely review of the program and the extension of Senate approval so that the program can continue uninterrupted. Programs that are recommended for continuation by their cognizant dean will
be reviewed in the second-to-last year of their current term of authorization. This overlap in timing is central for graduate-level programs, since admission to graduate school is specific to a degree program. The schedule for reviews is set by the Senate and is monitored annually by the Steering Committee. Any delay in the review schedule for a given program should be reported by the cognizant dean to C-RUM or C-GS. The chair of C-RUM or C-GS will immediately notify the Academic Secretary and the Steering Committee of any delays.
Appendix A

Statistical and Descriptive Information and Self-Study Narrative for C-RUM

Three types of information are needed to perform an effective program evaluation. The first two comprise information of a statistical or descriptive nature—information that characterizes the way a program is structured and what it accomplishes. The third is information of the reflective, self-assessment kind—information that indicates the program’s perception of its strengths and weaknesses, and that indicates where it is headed in the future. Parts two and three together should not exceed 5000 words. Please assemble a single PDF file where information of all three types is included. Specifically:

1. Please provide the following reference information and data:
   a. A copy of the IDP’s statistical information as assembled by the office of Institutional Research and Decision Support.
   b. A functional link to the website of the IDP, and a link to the Stanford Bulletin text and specifications for the academic requirements of the program.
   c. A statistical summary of the results from the applicable portion of the Senior Exit Survey conducted by the university.
   d. A link to a website listing the individual responses to open-ended questions in the Senior Exit Survey.
   e. A summary of the teaching evaluations for the program. (For identified departmental and IDP-specific core courses.)
   f. A listing of the principal peer programs in the country with links to their websites.
   g. The results of any special consultations, surveys, or focus groups conducted with current and former students, faculty, and administrators in support of this review. (Optional)

2. Please provide brief answers to the following questions:
   a. What is it that this field of study tries to achieve? Where does it fit with respect to other fields of study within its School and in the University? What roles do its graduates play in society? How does it compare with programs at peer institutions?
   b. What is the logic underlying the organization and sequencing of courses in the major? What are the educational objectives or learning outcomes that the program emphasizes? How are they determined and tracked to see that they are accomplished? Have they changed significantly since your last self-study? What role, if any, does a capstone experience play in your curriculum?
   c. How do you structure your undergraduate advising? How are advising responsibilities shared or assigned across the faculty? What is the role of non-academic council members and peer advisors in advising? Do you use peer advisors? How does advising take place for pre-major students and during the declaration process?
d. What opportunities are available for students to engage in research? Are there specific methods courses identified that support students engaged in research? What proportion of students take advantage of the opportunity?

e. How do you promote a sense of community among the students in the program? Are there efforts made to form a community among students doing honors? Are efforts made to provide a sense of inclusion to students undertaking a minor?

f. What roles, if any, does the IDP play in the intellectual vitality of the university beyond teaching its majors (e.g., the teaching of non-majors, general community building, etc.)?

g. If the program offers both an undergraduate and graduate IDP, please describe the connection between the two programs.

3. Once the information requested above has been assembled, please prepare a reflective, self-study assessment that addresses what you perceive to be the key successes and strengths of the program during that last authorization period, and the key challenges, weaknesses, or critical issues as the program moves forward into the next authorization period. This narrative should be written by the faculty responsible for setting the academic direction of the program (not staff).  

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1 The IDP is free to provide any additional materials that it feels would be helpful in assessing the program. The intent here is to minimize the number of required elements, not to restrict the program’s ability to portray its activities.

2 It is anticipated that the combined responses to items 2 and 3 above should not exceed 5000 words (~10 pages) in length.
Appendix B
Statistical and Descriptive Information
and Self-Study Narrative for C-GS

Three types of information are needed to perform an effective program evaluation. The first two comprise information of a statistical or descriptive nature—information that characterizes the way a program is structured and what it accomplishes. The third is information of the reflective, self-assessment kind—information that indicates the program’s perception of its strengths and weaknesses, and that indicates where it is headed in the future. Parts two and three together should not exceed 5000 words. Please assemble a single PDF file where information of all three types is included. Specifically:

1. Please provide the following reference information and data:
   a. A copy of the IDP’s statistical information as assembled by the office of Institutional Research and Decision Support.
   b. A functional link to the website of the IDP, and a link to the Stanford Bulletin text and specifications for the academic requirements of the program.
   c. For doctoral IDPs, a summary of the results from the Doctoral Exit Survey conducted by the university.
   d. A summary of the teaching evaluations for the program. (For identified departmental and IDP-specific core courses.)
   e. A listing of the principal peer programs in the country with links to their websites.
   f. The results of any special consultations, surveys, or focus groups conducted with current and former students, faculty, and administrators in support of this review. (Optional)

2. Please provide brief answers to the following questions:
   a. What is it that this field of study tries to achieve? Where does it fit with respect to other fields of study within its School and in the University? What career paths are its graduates expected to pursue? For existing IDPs, what career paths have graduates pursued?
   b. What is the target size of the program and the ideal size of each entering cohort? For a new IDP, what is the planned ramp up of the program until the target size is reached? How does this size impact effective advising and mentoring in the program? If the program offers financial support to students, explain the funding package for students in the program. What pressures do students face at different stages in their careers at Stanford because of the structure of funding?
   c. Describe the curriculum (required core courses and elective courses); which courses are offered in other departments, and which are specific to the IDP, and how faculty are recruited to teach courses in the IDP. How are the challenges of staffing the core curriculum and providing innovative new courses being met?
d. Describe the timing and procedure for all required milestones and evaluations of students. For master’s IDPs, describe any capstone requirements (e.g., thesis or presentation), and procedure for assessment. For doctoral IDPs, explain the timing and procedure by which the program assesses students for advancement to candidacy (e.g., qualifying exams), and conducts the university oral examination. Describe the expected time to degree and actual time to degree. Describe challenges students and faculty face in meeting program requirements in a timely manner.

e. How does the program maintain intellectual rigor appropriate to the graduate degree pursued?

f. How does the program tailor advising to different stages in the students’ career? How do students find advisors? How do they change advisors? How are faculty advisors trained to advise students in the program?

g. What kinds of professional development is offered to students? For doctoral IDPs, what opportunities do students have to teach and how are they trained to teach in the intellectual discipline(s) of the program?

h. How are faculty recruited to participate in the IDP? What expectations are made of affiliated faculty for participation in the program, especially for teaching, advising, and maintaining the program’s mission and vitality? How are affiliated faculty encouraged to renew their commitments to the program?

i. Explain plans for ensuring continuity of faculty leadership of the program.

j. If the program offers both an undergraduate and graduate IDP, please describe the connection between the two programs.

3. Once the information requested above has been assembled, please prepare a reflective, self-study assessment that addresses what you perceive to be the key successes and strengths of the program during that last authorization period, and the key challenges, weaknesses, or critical issues as the program moves forward into the next authorization period. This narrative should be written by the faculty responsible for setting the academic direction of the program (not staff).²

¹ The IDP is free to provide any additional materials that it feels would be helpful in assessing the program. The intent here is to minimize the number of required elements, not to restrict the program’s ability to portray its activities.

² It is anticipated that the combined responses to items 2 and 3 above should not exceed 5000 words (~10 pages) in length.