

## MEMORANDUM

TO: APC  
FROM: Andrew Janiak  
DATE: 18 October 2013  
RE: Resolution on the proposed MA in Bioethics and Science Policy

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On 11 October, APC received a proposal for an MA in Bioethics and Science Policy from Professors Nita Farahany and Hunt Willard, along with a summary of the MAC review of the proposal. The proposed degree would be granted by the Graduate School and administered by IGSP, with Professor Farahany serving as director of the program. The program has substantial financial backing from the Provost in the form of a working capital loan. The proposal describes a strong national market for students and professionals with training in bioethics, and articulates Duke's campus-wide strength in this area. APC met with Professor Farahany on 16 October to discuss the proposal in depth. APC found the proposal detailed and compelling. In the interest of making the program maximally effective, we offer the following recommendations.

- (1) The proposed program seeks to differentiate itself from its national competitors through the addition of the "Science Policy" rubric to its degree. In conversation with APC, Professor Farahany indicated that the MA program would initially focus on bioethics, with science policy serving as a secondary area. Some APC members are concerned that the current program provides insufficient training in policy to justify its inclusion in the title. One way to address this concern is to change the title so that student expectations align better with the program's offerings; another way is to build more policy-related training into the program. Professor Farahany indicated a willingness to add policy components to the program; we endorse that plan and encourage more extensive discussions with faculty who teach policy and science policy at the University (including, but not limited to, Sanford faculty).
- (2) Although this degree is focused on a specific professional area, viz. bioethics, it also offers students the choice of concentrating on one of three broad "thematic areas": neuroscience, genomics, and impact ethics. Given that the degree can be completed in as little as one year (including one summer), we are somewhat concerned that these areas are sufficiently vast to prevent students in the program from encountering them meaningfully, especially when also accounting for necessary policy and potential statistics training. A secondary concern, mitigated somewhat by the presence of five core courses, is that splitting students by thematic area may prevent the formation of a coherent intellectual community.
- (3) With any interdisciplinary degree program, there is a danger that faculty members who offer its core courses might be perceived *ipso facto* as shirking departmental teaching responsibilities. To minimize this risk, we recommend that whenever possible, the program director find faculty whose core teaching mission within their home units can be characterized as overlapping with the teaching of the program's core courses. Admittedly, attempts to minimize this risk may influence the future choice of core courses, or at least their evolving disciplinary focus. We are encouraged by the prospect that the program may participate in the hiring of faculty who can teach core courses in the future.

- (4) APC appreciates Professor Farahany's recognition that a large cohort of professional and working students in this MA program may require core courses to be offered at times that do not conflict with standard work schedules. Since such part-time students may not encounter full-time students on a regular basis, we endorse Professor Farahany's suggestion that the program operate a common space and create community-building activities. We also endorse the suggestion that the program employ distance-learning technologies that enable working professionals to participate in extracurricular activities and meetings.
- (5) In addition to the perceived market for this degree amongst working professionals, we also perceive a potential market amongst more recent college graduates looking for a master's-level credential to advance their careers. We hope that the program will eventually advertise to, and focus on, both groups of potential students.
- (6) Because of the inherent complexity of this proposed interdisciplinary MA—which involves students and faculty from Fuqua, DIBS, Law, DGHI, Sanford, A&S, IGSP, the Trent Center, the Kenan Institute, etc.—we recommend a comprehensive review of the program after three years. The review might include an analysis of the policy components of the degree, its three thematic areas, its career placement record, and whether its marketing, admissions, and recruiting procedures are yielding the kinds of students that can thrive in the program, and beyond.