

Academic Programs Committee Resolution

Proposal for Joint Ph.D. Programs between the Sanford School of Public Policy and Allied Disciplines (Psychology and Neuroscience, Sociology)

Summary

APC supports the proposal for joint doctoral programs between the Sanford School of Public Policy and the Disciplines (Psychology and Neuroscience, Sociology). The proponents have been receptive and responsive to questions and concerns raised throughout the review process (by ECGF and APC). We find that the revised proposal (dated 28 October 2016) to be intellectually compelling, and well thought-out in terms of the administration of the joint doctoral programs. Independent of the merits of this particular proposal, APC recognizes that Duke has little experience with joint doctoral programs, and in the event that similar joint programs are proposed in the future, we may need to develop common expectations and criteria for their evaluation.

Introduction:

The Sanford School of Public Policy has submitted a proposal to establish two joint Ph.D. programs, one with Psychology and Neuroscience and the other with Sociology (referred to as the Disciplines). No new Ph.D. is proposed; rather, the two joint programs will be established administratively as optional tracks within the current public policy doctoral program and the two current doctoral programs in the Disciplines. Each proposed joint program represents a blending of the Sanford doctoral program requirements with those of each of the two respective Disciplines programs.

Proposal Evaluation and Revisions

Following faculty review and discussion during the 2014-2015 academic year, the proposal was approved by the Sanford faculty in May 2015, and by the faculties of Psychology and Neuroscience and Sociology in the fall of 2015 (see details provided in the proposal). Although no new degree program is proposed, it was decided that the approval process would require positive votes by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Faculty (ECGF), the Academic Programs Committee (APC) and the Academic Council.

The ECGF met with Professor Kenneth Dodge and colleagues in March of 2016 to consider the initial proposal from Sanford. The ECGF asked Professor Dodge to address a number of issues in a revised proposal, which was reviewed by the ECGF on 3 May 2016. The ECGF found that most of their questions had been addressed, and voted to approve the proposal. On 12 September 2016 Dean Klingensmith transmitted the revised proposal (dated August 7, 2016) to the Provost for further consideration.

On 21 September 2016, APC-Subcommittee B met with Professors Dodge (Sanford), Elizabeth Marsh (Psychology and Neuroscience) and Stephen Vaisey (Sociology) to discuss the proposal. Prior to the meeting, APC submitted to the proponents a number of questions and comments, which formed the basis for productive discussion and clarification of a number of points. Following this meeting, APC discussed the proposal and transmitted to the proponents a written response, which can be summarized as follows:

- Overall, the committee finds the proposed joint doctoral programs innovative and forward-looking.
- The committee's overarching concern is that justification for the proposal is described primarily as a marketing tool to attract and place doctoral students, rather than as an exciting and potentially transformative intellectual endeavor. We noted that the intellectual merits of the proposal were clear in our discussion with the proponents, but not in the text of the proposal.
- The committee encouraged the proponents to revise the proposal to emphasize the compelling intellectual motivation, as well as address minor points of clarification raised during our meeting.

In response, the proponents submitted a revised proposal (dated 28 October 2016). APC discussed the revised proposal on 2 November 2016 and found that the proponents had addressed our concerns and made a strong case for moving forward.

Resolution

APC supports the proposal for joint doctoral programs between the Sanford School of Public Policy and the Disciplines (Psychology and Neuroscience, Sociology).

Vote: 14 approve, 1 abstention, 1 no response