

**CALS Academic Planning Council**  
6201 Microbial Sciences Building  
May 16, 2023, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

**Present:** Bradley Bolling, Todd Courtenay, Noah Feinstein, Huichuan Lai (via Zoom), Jamie Nack, Francisco Peñagaricano, Sean Schoville, John Shutske, Michael Xenos

**Not present:** Jed Colquhoun, Glenda Gillaspay, Mehdi Kabbage, Patrick Masson, Michael Thomas, Thea Whitman

**Ex Officio:** Louis Macias, Mark Rickenbach, Karen Wassarman

**Guests:** Claudio Gratton, Nick Balster

Karen Wassarman called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm.

**1. May 16, 2023 meeting minutes for approval**

Without objections, minutes were approved by consent and will be posted on APC website.

**2. Agroecology BS, NOI proposal**

Claudio Gratton and Nick Balster, representatives from the working group, attended to discuss the Agroecology BS NOI proposal.

- The project began in 2018 with student needs assessment, employer survey on what kind of graduates they are looking for, and groups working on the name for the major.
- The name Agroecology represents a recognized discipline that includes both the ecology of agriculture (the sustainable agricultural practices) and agroecology as a movement (the social dimensions).
- Agroecology centers on the integration of four thematic areas: Organisms, Land, Ecosystem, and People.
- Working groups from five departments (around forty faculty) were involved in the development of key learning outcomes. The main impetus for this major is that the current problems facing agriculture transcend disciplinary boundaries, and this major is a creative way to bring all these threads together and integrate and interact with people outside academia.
- The major will have 2 to 3 core classes: the existing Agroecology 103 entry-level course, a sophomore-junior level experiential course, temporarily called 303, and a 500-level capstone course.
- There are eight measurable learning outcomes that align within the curriculum, the thematic areas, and the philosophy of the major.
- The curriculum consists of foundational courses, core courses, depth, and the capstone. The working group is happy with the current curriculum but understands it still needs more “fleshing out”.

Questions from the committee

**Q:** Is there an existing Agroecology major?

**A:** There is an Agroecology master's program in CALS and courses with 'agroecology' in the name.

**Q:** How do you see the relationship between master's program and bachelor's program?

**A:** The Agroecology master's program brings students together from different home departments, while the bachelor's program is an opportunity for students to become competent with the systems and the organisms they will be working with. After completing the bachelor's, the hope is for students to stay on for the master's program. In addition, Agroecology master's students will be able to TA courses in the BS program.

**Q:** One of the learning outcomes is to develop and promote great communication skills. Are you planning to have courses that develop writing and presenting skills?

**A:** Yes! The 100-level courses will focus on oral and written communication skills, and the capstone will develop presentation skills. These skills will also be integrated: i.e., course 303 (not fully developed) will have students working in groups to solve a problem and then present their work.

**Q:** I am curious about the flexibility and the credit requirements for students who want to double major?

**A:** The question can be broadened to include the certificates. This will be the next step in the process of 'fleshing out' the curriculum. We want to make sure we are building enough flexibility for students to get a certificate or double major, while maintaining the integrity of the program.

**Q:** Can you talk about why you want a year of Chemistry and not Biology?

**A:** Biology part was discussed extensively, and it was easier to think about it in terms of flexibility. Chemistry is something we might consider in the future.

**Q:** Are there thoughts or evidence on how does the private sector view the name of the major?

**A:** I don't have an answer to that, but we think it was helpful to come up with a name that is not mainstream.

**Q:** Have you thought about the graduates from this program? Is there a market for them in Wisconsin or worldwide, or do you imagine all go to grad school?

**A:** I think students graduating from this program will be successful in working with agencies and groups that think more broadly. We think that having a wider perspective even for traditional careers in agriculture will be valued.

Noah Feinstein made a motion to approve the Notice of Intent to Plan proposal for Agroecology BS and John Shutske seconded. APC voted unanimously to approve the said NOI.

### **3. Update on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Louis Macias, Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, attended to update APC on the ODEI current work and plans. He noted that the DEI team is largely focused on three key areas:

1. Professional Development - DEI learning
2. Data – providing insight and data to be more proactive, not constantly reactive.
3. College Climate

Next, Louis Macias expanded on the following:

- What is going well?
  - In CALS, there is a general desire for positive change evidenced by various efforts, and that includes faculty, staff, and students.
  - The presence of DEI committees and the impact on policies, DEI programming, climate survey developments, etc.
  - General acknowledgment that diversity is important among faculty and students.
- What is missing?
  - A shared conception of success (lacking a strategy for success).
  - There is a need for more coordinated DEI programming and better learning opportunities.
  - Greater focus on inclusion - CALS is doing well in the area of representation and diversity but more needs to be done on inclusion of staff and students.
- What is ODEI working on?
  - ODEI is working on a website as a resource for answers. Launch expected in Fall 2023.
  - Learning Hub – a centralized webpage with curated multimodal learning resources. Launch expected in Fall 2023.
  - Consultation Service – formalized resource for consultation and intake provided to all CALS. Service expected to launch in Fall 2023.
  - Climate Reporting System – a tool that provides data for more proactive insight on climate issues. The Climate Reporting System is also expected to launch in Fall 2023.
  - ODEI Quarterly Updates – a mechanism or platform where updates are available to all. Expected to launch in Fall 2023.
  - Professional Development Requirement – a concept that came out of APC. We are working on it and want this to be impactful and user-friendly. It will go live in the next calendar year and will be implemented in January 2025.

#### Question from the committee

**Q:** Regarding the climate surveys, are there any mechanisms or platforms to serve as a constant barometer on where things are, the trends, and directions?

**A:** Yes, there are! The campus has faculty, staff, and student surveys and they have aggregated results that do not differ from CALS results. Because climate surveys lack the immediacy and we want a quicker response, we are looking into poll surveys – something we can administer biweekly and track data.

**Q:** Is your office thinking about how to communicate with alumni?

**A:** With ODEI being a newly established office in CALS, we have not had conversations on how to engage our alumni yet.

**Q:** The issue of recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, especially a diverse graduate student body, has often come up at APC while reviewing programs, has your office thought about how to help programs achieve this?

**A:** Programs have a degree of protectionism to the way things are done historically. Also, on the admission side of things, due to the volume of applications diversity could be overlooked.

**Q:** The administration and folks at the DEI have been in the press lately. What are we going to do about that? What is the conversation about that?

**A:** To talk about the broader issue feels too philosophical and removed so I prefer to talk about what is in front of us. In my opinion, when hiring faculty and staff, a general DEI statement is not the way. More effective way is to think about the specific position and how do values look like in practice. Also, we should not dehumanize colleagues and should reject the idea of normalizing it. I will be communicating and advocating on my end, but it is an issue for all of us, not just the DEI folks, and the faculty has levers and power for change.

**Q:** In your analysis of the work your office is focusing on, what are the things that can be pushed to the departments?

**A:** We need more champions and people to 'waive this flag'. My team and I will do our best to provide resources and support mechanisms. The hope is that folks are going to make space for these discussions in meetings, think about inclusion, voting rights, etc.

#### **4. Discussion: topics for next year**

- Improving advising & marketing.
- Interdepartmental and departmental relationships
- Optimizing the relationship with L&S and sharing resources.

Meeting adjourned at 2:33pm.