Film Program

Proposal Regarding Reduction Recommendation

October 2009

I. Film’s recent growth in enrollment and course offerings

Film 121 increase from 17 (SP08) to 29 (SP09) – a 70% increase

Film 200/800 increase from 18 (F08) to 32 (SP09) – a 78% increase

Film 110 average enrollment past three years: 48

Film 153 average enrollment past five semesters: 29.5 (cap is 30)

In SP09, for the first time, Film successfully offered four sections of Film 100

In the current F09 semester, full-time faculty is doing Study Abroad in Paris, so only three sections of Film 100 were offered:

--all sections at census enrolled close to cap (50); one section currently over cap at 66.

Film’s projected LOAD for 08-09: 377

Film’s actual LOAD for 08-09: 489

II. Film and LOAD

Over the three-year period from 05-06 to 07-08, Film’s average LOAD was 456.

Here are some other average LOADS over the same period, from similar departments NOT recommended for reduction:

Journalism: 239

History: 445

Art History: 436

Broadcasting: 308

Engineering: 322

I am aware there are a variety of legitimate mitigating circumstances that partially account for these LOAD numbers—as there are regarding Film’s LOAD. My point is a “bottom line” point: there are many other programs on campus with similar LOAD numbers to Film’s. My intention is not to make any comment on these programs, but only to illustrate the problem with singling out Film for reduction, based on LOAD.

III. Film, CSM’s Mission, and the future

Unlike the film programs at City College of San Francisco or De Anza College (which focus on production and technical training), CSM’s film program focuses on a variety of critical thinking skills, with special, unique emphasis on enhancing the visual media literacy of students. We also develop students’ historical and aesthetic knowledge of contemporary visual culture. All film courses thus fit squarely within the mission of the college.

Indeed, if the college moves more toward functioning primarily as a transfer institution, film courses can play a vital role in this move. Film offers students Humanities transfer and graduation credit through courses that distinguish themselves from the more typical verbal/literary Humanities credit course. Our film courses directly address the visual, “moving image” electronic environment our students have grown up in, and will participate in as adults. (Film’s newly created “Film and New Digital Media” course, also CSU/UC/Area 3, is germane here.)

IV. Recommendation regarding program reduction

Based on the above, a very strong case can be made for requesting that Film be removed from program reduction status. If this were to occur, Film would readily agree to work with the Language Arts Dean to reduce both hourly faculty course offerings and course offerings with consistently low enrollment.

However, if the Academic Senate and/or the Committee on Instruction decide not to make this recommendation, then Film is requesting the following recommendation: that Film be left on program reduction: hourly faculty, but be removed from program reduction: full-time faculty.

This would result in the following schedule for the full-time faculty member:

3 sections of Film 100

1 section of Film 200/800

NOTE: four courses constitute a full-time load; each course is 3.75 FLC, due to additional class/lab time, for film screenings

V. Important points about this schedule

--it honors the employment contract of the full-time faculty member;

--it constitutes a 50% reduction in the Film program (from 8 courses to 4 courses);

--it gives students some minimal choice in film courses (two different courses);

--it preserves academic diversity and fosters relevancy of curriculum, as the 200 course changes topic each term;

--it accommodates “lifelong learner” students with the option of registering for an 800 level course (Film 800);

--all these courses (except for 800) are UC and CSU transferable, count toward IGETC credit, and fulfill Area 3 graduation requirements;

--none of these courses has a prerequisite.

Lastly, with student demand so high for courses, and so many courses being cut across the college, there seems a strong likelihood that all four courses would achieve high enrollment.

VI. Conclusion: Film and the Big Picture

The Film program understands the severity of current budgetary restrictions. We acknowledge that some of our courses have uneven enrollment patterns, and that there are not too many A.A. degrees taken in Film. In the spirit of the crucial notion repeatedly expressed by both Chancellor Galatola and CSM President Claire--that “we will come through this trying time better and stronger”—let me suggest the following scenario, in a purely speculative vein.

Perhaps Film should no longer offer a terminal degree. This would support Film scaling back course offerings, and rotating certain courses over a longer period of time. The emphasis would be on students transferring, and/or GE credit toward graduation in other majors.

Pursuing this “streamlining” vision further: perhaps there are other related programs on campus that likewise have very few majors and uneven enrollment. Could the college not create one cross-disciplinary major that such programs from different divisions would feed into, something like “Media Arts” or “Visual Studies” or “Media and Culture”--? (This indeed is the current academic trend, where film, television, video and new electronic media such as the Internet are taught together, and in relation to each other.) Students would choose courses from each (or some) of these programs to earn their “Media Arts” degree.

My hope is that the college will see such an idea as indicative of constructive avenues for tackling the necessity of reducing programs. It is likewise my hope that the college will see how Film can contribute greatly to its new scope, identity and vision.

I want to thank the Academic Senate, the Committee on Instruction and the CSM Administration for taking the time and energy to carefully consider this proposal.

David Laderman

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