



College of Earth, Ocean, and  
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December 9, 2019

To Members of the Curriculum Council:

We write to express deep concerns regarding the proposed undergraduate degree program (B.Sc, B.A.) in Marine Studies (MAST). Our concerns are based on discussions with faculty in our respective colleges, independent assessments of the MAST degree program, and careful consideration of the comments submitted to the Curriculum Proposal System. They encompass the following broad areas:

**The course offerings and degree requirements are insufficiently unique:** The number of new courses proposed for the degree program (two) is low, and one of the new courses has considerable overlap with two existing courses that are consistently offered in other colleges. The remainder of contributing courses are bundled from existing programs and do not add sufficient novelty to justify a wholly separate degree program.

**The extant natural science degree programs at OSU are abundant and encompass MAST themes:** There exist at OSU several degree programs that serve the prospective community of marine-and-environmental-interested students, including Natural Resources, Environmental Sciences, Marine Biology, Fisheries and Wildlife Science, and Ocean Science. The intellectual space not already occupied by existing degree programs lies more centrally within the liberal arts as a Bachelor of Arts program of study.

**The market analysis is not robust:** The market analyses provided in the CPS *do not assess interest in Marine Studies relative to existing and highly related degree programs and course options at OSU* (see summary, p. 30 of the proposal and appendices concerning market research). *Moreover, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that new students will be attracted to OSU solely on the basis of the MAST degree.* Thus, there remains considerable risk that that the MAST degree program will lead to fragmentation of current and newly enrolled students among degree programs already in place.

These concerns lead us to conclude that the Marine Studies degree program outlined in the CPS needs more distinction. As currently proposed, MAST will decrease the efficiency of curriculum delivery and generate confusion over degree options. There exist other venues, such as certificate programs or minors, that can embody and reflect critical aspects of marine-related social sciences and humanities. Examples include a blue economy emphasis, in partnership with COB; or marine policy, in partnership with CLA. These alternate avenues will better serve the student body, and will minimize the risk of degree overlap among an already crowded field of offerings.

We have included the Sr. Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts for their information and review. We advise the Curriculum Council to return the proposal to the originators for more satisfactory resolution of the concerns noted above. This resolution may

include revision of the proposal to reflect a Bachelor of Arts degree program that has more grounding and novelty in the social sciences and humanities; or a range of certificate options that embrace the compelling challenges and opportunities that the ocean presents.



Roberta Marinelli, Dean  
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Alan Sams, Dean  
College of Agricultural Sciences

Cc: Alix Gitelman, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education; Susan Capalbo, Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs; and Larry Rodgers, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.