24 February 2014

TO: Kelly Haslam, Assistant Dean, Graduate Faculty Executive Committee

FROM: Kathyrn VandenBosch, Dean, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

RE: Discontinue Community and Environmental Sociology MS degree

At its regularly scheduled meeting on February 18, 2014, the College’s Academic Planning Council approved the Department of Community and Environmental Sociology’s request to discontinue the master’s of science degree program in Community and Environmental Sociology. We understand this motion requires action by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee and ask that it be placed on their agenda at the earliest possible time. Supporting documents are attached. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

cc: CALS APC
    Jess Gilbert
    Jocelyn Milner
20 February 2014

TO: Jess Gilbert, Professor and Chair, Community and Environmental Sociology  
     Kate VandenBosch, Dean and Director, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

FROM: John Karl Scholz, Dean

RE: Request for Comment: Proposal to Discontinue MS in Community and Environmental Sociology

CC: Elaine Klein, Assistant Dean for Academic Planning, L&S  
    Jocelyn Milner, Associate Provost and Director, Academic Planning and Analysis  
    Pam Oliver, Professor and Chair, Sociology

On February 18, 2014 the L&S Academic Planning Council considered the request submitted by the Department of Community and Environmental Sociology to discontinue the MS in Community and Environmental Sociology. It was very useful to the council’s deliberations to have Professor Tigges explain the rationale for the change, and assure our members that students will continue to have available to them the option of being awarded the MS in Sociology.

The L&S APC unanimously approved a motion to support this request.
Jan. 28, 2014

Academic Planning Council
Dean Kathryn VandenBosch, Chair
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
University of Wisconsin-Madison
140 Agricultural Hall
Madison, WI 53706

Dear Colleagues on the CALS APC:

I am writing to request that we be permitted to discontinue the master’s of science degree in Community and Environmental Sociology (CES). The Department faculty voted unanimously in favor of discontinuation at its November 4, 2013 meeting. While discontinuing our MS, at our December 2 meeting, CES faculty agreed that we should retain our PhD minor.

Let me turn first to the MS degree. The Community and Environmental Sociology M.S. has had only been awarded to four students over the past five years; there are currently no students enrolled in it. Given low enrollment and little interest, there is no need to contact possible interested parties.

Beyond having excessively low enrollment, the degree is essentially redundant. The Department of Community and Environmental Sociology operates a combined PhD program with the Department of Sociology in the College of Letters and Science. Students who seek to work with Community and Environmental Sociology faculty apply to that program and can focus their course work and thesis and dissertation on community and environmental sociological issues. Students in the Sociology doctoral program receive a master’s (after writing a thesis) en route to a PhD (or if they have completed the master’s level requirements but are unable to continue on for the PhD).

We do not need to develop a “teach out” program and, in fact, the courses we offer will not change. The CES master’s has been simply a matter of naming. Students in our joint PhD program could simply request that their diploma indicate an M.S. Community and Environmental Sociology, instead of Sociology. This option will be eliminated with the discontinuation of the CES master’s degree. Finally, while we will continue to have

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students who come to Madison to study with faculty in Community and Environmental Sociology, in recent memory, there has been virtually no indication in promotional materials or as part of our digital presence that we offer a master’s in Community and Environmental Sociology. Thus, we need not warn prospective students of the impending change.

While we have not had students recently enroll in our PhD minor, we believe a central reason for that is our failure to promote the minor. Given the growing interest in the social scientific study of food and the environment, we expect interest in our minor among students in other social science disciplines, including environmental studies and geography. We intend to add a page to our website about the minor and will consider other promotional action. With these changes, should we find there is no demand for our minor, we will consider whether to maintain it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jess Gilbert
Professor and Chair