18 April, 2014

TO: Paul DeLuca, Provost

FROM: John Karl Scholz, Dean

RE: Request to Suspend Admission to Undergraduate Certificate in Global Cultures

ATTACHMENT: Memorandum, Keller to Scholz (4/10/2014)

CC: Maria Cancian, Associate Dean for Social Science
    Gery Essenmacher, Associate Dean for Student Academic Affairs
    Richard Keller, Director, International Studies Major
    Elaine Klein, Assistant Dean for Academic Planning
    Rubén Medina, Director, Global Cultures
    Jocelyn Milner, Associate Provost and Director, Academic Planning and Analysis
    Nancy Westphal-Johnson, Associate Dean for Academic Administration

On April 15, 2014, the L&S Academic Planning Council considered the attached request to suspend admission to the L&S Global Cultures Certificate program, which is administered in an arrangement between the program committee and the L&S International Studies Major.

The faculty have serious concerns about the academic merits of this program, which awards about 40 certificates to students each year. Though it was created with the laudable goal of supporting, promoting, and certifying student participation in study abroad programs, the faculty today is not convinced that there is adequate intellectual coherence and academic rigor found in the loose program structure, which requires two courses in combination with any study abroad program. Further, the program structure requires considerable “hands-on” attention for most awards to be granted, which places considerable pressure on staff advisors in the International Studies Major. Given impending transitions in the faculty that will reduce the already sparse faculty, and the strains on the staff who serve one of our largest undergraduate majors, the faculty are seeking a hiatus in adding new students to the program.

They would like to suspend admissions at the earliest opportunity; however, since students are already enrolling for the Fall 2014 term, that is likely to be Spring 2015. Eighty-six students are currently declared the program; of these, 49 are expected to graduate soon, and the remainder will continue to have access to advising through International Studies and will be allowed to complete the program. “Stopped out” students will also be allowed to complete the program. Finally, if a proposal to reorganize the program and reopen admission is not approved in Spring 2017, we expect that the program will be closed.

The L&S APC unanimously approved this request.
MEMORANDUM

From: Richard C. Keller, Director, International Studies Major
To: Karl Scholz, Dean, College of Letters and Science
CC: Elaine Klein, Assistant Dean, College of Letters and Science; Maria Cancian, Associate Dean, College of Letters and Science
Re: Proposal to Suspend the Global Cultures Certificate
Date: April 10, 2014

The Global Cultures certificate program was developed in 1993 largely through the work of Professor Joseph Elder from the Department of Sociology. The certificate program is an artifact of its era, reflecting the explosion of interest in globalization in the post-Cold War period. It has since attracted large numbers of students, in part due to interest in the subject and in part due to the relative ease of its completion. Its requirements are straightforward, particularly for students who plan to study abroad: an introductory course, a fifth-semester foreign language course, twelve elective credits (which are usually completed abroad), and a capstone seminar. Although the certificate program is currently directed by Professor Rubén Medina of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the International Studies Major advising staff still bear a great deal of the burden associated with the certificate, including declaring, responding to general questions, and some direct advising.

This memorandum, approved by the International Studies Steering Committee on April 4, 2014, proposes to suspend admissions to the Global Cultures Certificate program for a three-year period beginning in Summer 2014.

Rationale for Suspension:

For several years the International Studies Major has had concerns about the academic merits of the certificate. Most students fulfill the requirements of the course through study abroad. As long as students are participating in a UW study abroad program, the curriculum requirements state, “study abroad credits may be applied to the certificate regardless of the course’s topics or transfer equivalent.” This raises questions about the coherence of the certificate. While the major supports incentives for study abroad, we are not convinced that the fact of studying abroad constitutes a discrete academic program in its own right. The major’s steering committee believes that encouraging students in study abroad programs to pursue a relevant area studies certificate (an African Studies certificate for a student who spends a semester in Uganda, for example) or an appropriate thematic certificate (such as the Global Health certificate) represents a more coherent and rigorous means for students to earn a credential linked to study abroad. Such a move would also strengthen the IS Major’s connections to area studies and other closely aligned campus units. The certificate also places significant pressure on the major’s small and overworked advising staff. The 2014 program review report for the major recommended that we expand our advising capacity, and suspending the program represents one means of accomplishing this task.
Efforts to Confer with and Notify Parties Affected by this Change

The IS Major director and associate director have had several conversations with the current director of the certificate program, who himself proposed the suspension. As the program is a certificate rather than a major, there are few students who enter the university with the intention of completing the program; likewise, the suspension of new admissions will not interfere with any student’s graduation requirements. The IS Major advisors have attempted to reduce the “pipeline” of students by refraining from promoting the program. There are also more rigorous and coherent alternatives to the certificate program for students who have a passion for the field, such as the Culture in an Age of Globalization option within the International Studies Major. There are no active networks of certificate alumni; nor does the program have a Board of Visitors or an affiliated community interest group.

Timeline and “Teach-Out” Plan

The academic year 2014-15 presents a strong opportunity to suspend admissions to the certificate program. The program’s current director will be on sabbatical for the academic year, and the founder of the program—and principal instructor of both the main foundations course and the capstone seminar—plans to retire. These personnel issues mean that it would prove difficult to serve newly admitted students in the program were it to continue unaltered. Providing continued service to already enrolled students will not present significant problems, as there is a substitution process already in place for the capstone seminar that will allow current students to identify alternative courses. Current and stopped-out students who have already completed the foundations course will be supported through the certificate by IS Major advisors; those who have merely indicated an interest or intention to complete the certificate, or who have declared the certificate but not yet completed the foundations course, will be directed by the advisors toward appropriate alternative thematic or regionally focused certificates.

The IS Major steering committee, working in close contact with the Major’s advising staff, will monitor the suspension closely, and will reassess the suspension beginning in AY 2016-17 in order to determine whether to re-open admissions to the certificate, to discontinue the program entirely, or to retailor the program to suit current needs.