MEMORANDUM

To: Sarah Mangelsdorf, Provost

From: Wendy L. Way, Associate Dean

Date: September 25, 2014

Re: Discontinuation of the Degree Major in Consumer Affairs

On September 22, the School of Human Ecology Academic Planning Council voted unanimously to permanently discontinue the degree major in Consumer Affairs. Dean Soyeon Shim and I both concur with the decision and, with this memo, forward the recommendation for review and possible approval by the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC).

Admissions to the Consumer Affairs program were suspended beginning in the fall of 2012 after the UAPC approved the School’s December 2011 request to suspend (attached). Although the program enrolled a large number of students (164), resources were not sufficient to continue to support all three degree majors that existed in the department at the time. Besides achieving a more reasonable faculty/student ratio, the change was designed to better enable the School to align academic programs with existing centers of excellence for research and development and chart more explicit career paths for students.

There are now just 14 continuing students enrolled in the Consumer Affairs program. According to adviser notes, 7 of these are expected to graduate in December of 2014, 6 in May of 2015 and the last in December of 2015. We have also determined that two additional students have been steadily working to complete their degrees part-time but are currently stopped out. At their current pace, we expect they will be able to complete their degrees by August of 2016.

Both our Department of Consumer Science and School Student Academic Affairs unit are committed to continuing to support students (those currently enrolled, those who are stopped out, and any others who do stop out) in completing the Consumer Affairs program until August of 2016. Courses for the major will continue to be offered through August of 2016 as needed. To ensure quality experiences for students, student course needs and progress will be monitored carefully and unique needs (e.g., those of the two stopped out students) met through appropriate course substitutions and/or independent study offerings. After August of 2016, any stopped out student(s) interested in re-entry will be advised by the Assistant Dean for Student Academic Affairs who will guide them in selecting another program such as one of the other two Consumer

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Science degree majors (Personal Finance or Retailing) or an individualized degree major in Human Ecology.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.
Proposal to Suspend Admissions to the  
B.S. in Consumer Affairs  
October 24, 2011

The Program

The Consumer Affairs B.S. degree major is one of three degree majors offered through the Consumer Science Department in the School of Human Ecology (together with Retailing and Personal Finance). Students who graduate with this major are uniquely situated to bring a consumer perspective to positions in business, government, or communication. A total of 164 students out of 338 in the Department are currently enrolled in the Consumer Affairs major. Another 17 students (out of 61 students that applied) were admitted to the major during the Fall 2011 admissions process for Spring of 2012.

Rationale for Suspending Admissions

Over the past three years, the Consumer Science Department has conducted a self-study of its undergraduate programs and has had both external and internal reviews. These reviews pointed out the very high student-faculty ratio (79.5:1) in the department and the high dependence on courses outside of the Department for the three majors (Consumer Affairs, Personal Finance and Retailing). Each review recommended suspending a major until such time as the Department could hire more faculty. To address the overload concern, the Department participated in 3 MIU exercises without success.

The School of Human Ecology has engaged in a great deal of strategic planning in response to recent state budget reductions and campus decisions about internal reallocation of funds. As a result of that planning process, the Department has recently been allocated one additional FTE to hire a professor in Personal Finance. While this position will help address the needs of the Personal Finance program, it does not address the critical need for faculty required to sustain all three of the undergraduate majors. In consultation with the Dean, and taking into account available instructional resources, job placements for each major, the existence of centers related to departmental majors (Center for Financial Security and Center for Retailing), registration of the Personal Finance major with the Certified Financial Planner™ Board of Standards, and recent graduates’ assessment of the majors, the Department voted to suspend admissions to the Consumer Affairs major.

Plan for Implementation

We propose to suspend new admissions to the Consumer Affairs major commencing with the fall semester of 2012. Assuming that we receive appropriate funding, we will continue to offer the courses needed by currently enrolled and admitted students, the last 5 of whom are expected to graduate in the spring of 2015. Of the 164 students currently enrolled, 73 are seniors, 28 are juniors, 59 are sophomores and 4 are freshmen. Of those admitted for spring of 2012, 5 are seniors, 8 juniors, 3 sophomores, and 1 a freshman. Students in the major either have been or will be notified that the Department will be suspending enrollments and that they need to plan carefully to complete all their Consumer Affairs requirements in a timely fashion. The Department is committed to helping all students enrolled and admitted complete their degree requirements. Student progress will be monitored carefully so that special
arrangements (such as independent study options) can be made as needed for students not able to finish by the spring of 2015.