

To: Juliann Allison, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy

From: Sherryl Vint, Director
Speculative Fiction and Cultures of Science Program

RE: CEP Findings and Recommendations for SFCS Minor

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to the internal review of the SFCS minor. I have distributed the report to the faculty affiliated with the program and incorporate any feedback that I received in this memo.

Like CEP members, the SFCS faculty believe that the program has educational merit, and we thank the Committee for recognizing its promise. We believe that the reason that so few students have selected the minor is a lack of coordinated outreach to undergraduates. When the minor was developed, we intended that its launch would be accompanied by extra-curricular events that would incorporate undergraduate students into the research culture associated with the SFCS Designated Emphasis, which is a highly successful program responsible for recruiting a high proportion of graduate students to UCR's English Department. This outreach did not happen due to an absence of leadership for the minor component of the program, as we discussed in more detail in our self-study. As well, the disruptions of COVID over the past two years has also mean that we have not been able to return to these efforts, despite very recent hires that promise to revitalize the program.

Faculty agree that the lack of dedicated resources for the program have been the main reason that it has not been more successful in building an undergraduate community. Given budget issues at the university, we do not anticipate that this will change in terms of budget or the possibility of teaching release for the Director, something that would entice more people to be interested in the position. At the same time, however, we do see a pathway forward to more successfully establishing a research community related to the minor and to ensuring that the courses are more regularly offered, namely more fully to integrate teaching for the program within the Department of English. English already has the most cross-listed courses associated with the program.

The Department of English already supports the interdisciplinary Medical and Health Humanities minor, including assigning faculty to teach its courses as part of their normal teaching load, meaning that no additional resources are required to fund them. It is feasible that the SFCS courses could also be offered in this way, given that the core faculty in the program are in the Department of English, as are the overwhelming majority of graduate students affiliated with the program. As well, the recent hire of andré carrington provides a senior faculty member who will soon be in a position to take on leadership with a focus on building the minor. I have discussed this possibility with Dr. carrington, who is interested in pursuing it, but only in AY 2023-2024 given that he is one of the co-PIs on the Sawyer Seminar grant that UCR will host this coming academic year. Finally, the Department of English has also just hired two junior faculty members who will begin in July 2022, both working on speculative cultures.

We thus believe that these factors will allow this minor to finally have the leadership and attention it needs, and we look forward to reporting on a more successful program at our new review.