

**Committee on Educational Policy
Preliminary Findings and Recommendations
Internal Undergraduate Program Review
Minor in Speculative Fiction and Cultures of Science**

Background

Speculative Fiction and Cultures of Science minor was established in 2014 in a joint initiative with a designated emphasis for graduate students. According to the vision statement the minor explores intersection among speculative fiction, science, and technology studies, and traditions of speculative thought. This minor lies at the intersection of speculative fiction and science/technology studies. Students completing the minor take 24 upper-division units in total, which includes a subset of 16 units from approved courses in fine arts, humanities, and social sciences.

There are no dedicated faculty associated with this program, but it draws faculty from humanities, social sciences, and performing arts. A faculty member from the English department directs the program. The program also has affiliated faculty from anthropology, English, comparative literature, gender and sexuality studies, history, media and culture studies, philosophy, and theater, film, and digital production. The program relies for administrative support on an undergraduate advisor whose role is to assist students meeting SFCS minor completion requirements. There is no dedicated budget attached to this program.

Program Self Study Summary

The committee requested 1) a statement concerning the program's vision, 2) an internal evaluation of the programs strength and weaknesses and current plans to address any deficiencies, long-range goals, and enrollment plans, and 3) data on how many students begin the minor but do not complete it. In response, the committee had access to two documents to review this minor. The first was the SFCS minor's vision statement used for the internal review. The second was the result of a survey conducted on faculty teaching in this program. In the survey, 21 faculty were requested to fill the survey and 11 responses were received. This report presents a summary of the available information.

Strengths

The vision statement articulates the need and potential for this minor very well. According to the vision statement, the interdisciplinary nature of this minor allows students to synthesize knowledge at the intersection of many different disciplines. The minor offers students opportunities to learn about and conduct research in many areas of contemporary importance including climate change, genetic engineering, AI, social justice movements such as the black lives matter, and economic equity. Students may be able to further their understanding of humanities and social sciences methodologies and research priorities.

Insights from faculty survey

Some of the insights from the feedback survey from faculty teaching in this program are as follows:

- This program seems to be one of a few of its kind; faculty teaching in this minor are not aware of similar minors in other universities. On the one hand, this uniqueness signals a need for the program. On the other hand, the low enrollments, and the lack of similar offerings by other universities brings into question whether there is really a need for such a minor. Given the lower number of students enrolled in such minor since its inception (only one student from 2014 – 2020), the latter seems to be more probable.
- Some faculty feel that it might be better that such minor be folded into any existing major given the low enrollments and the lack of resources devoted to this program.

- The faculty do not also have a sense of the students as a group and their needs. A large fraction of the faculty who teach in the program. They also consider it as a low to moderate priority among their many responsibilities.
- The survey suggests that no additional faculty is required with 43% of the respondents responding that no more faculty are needed to teach in this minor.

Findings and Recommendations

Based on the review of the available documents, the committee recognizes that:

- The minor has academic merit.
- Only one student has completed the minor since its inception, and it is not clear why students are electing to pursue it.
- The major issue for this minor is inconsistent/missing leadership according to the faculty surveyed.

In summary, this committee recognizes the significant challenges for this minor, particularly in both lack of dedicated budget and faculty leadership. If resources/faculty is spread thin, this committee questions if the continuation of this minor can be justified in the future, but it is too early to recommend its discontinuation. We encourage departmental effort/support for the minor and look forward for improvement at the next review.