**A Proposal to Allow Double Majors across College Boundaries**

**Introduction**

As Ohio State continues to improve the profile of the students we admit, the number of students interested in pursuing more than one major has noticeably increased. Indeed, the University’s many and varied programs are a significant appeal in our ability to recruit competitive undergraduates. While the demand for second majors has increased, we have not changed the way we require students to access this wealth of programs. Once they get here, academically ambitious students trying to complete two majors often experience the structure of the University as a bureaucratic impediment to accomplishing their goals.

Academic programs are associated with colleges, each of which offers its own degrees. Majors exist, conceptually, as a component of a degree offered by the college where the major resides. A student cannot complete a college’s degree without completing some related, appropriate major; conversely, however, under current practice, a student cannot complete one of the college’s majors without completing its degree. As a result, students who aim to complete majors offered by separate colleges must generally complete two degrees, and completing a second degree often adds hours and degree requirements that extend well beyond the requirements for the major.

**Proposal**

This proposal recommends that colleges and the Council on Academic Affairs consider whether it is practicable to provide more flexibility for students to complete double majors across the university, by permitting a student (when doing so is academically feasible) to complete a major separately from the degree to which it would normally belong, as a component the student can add to the degree he or she is primarily pursuing. In completing the second major, students would need to complete not only the requirements of the major itself, but any prerequisite requirements, as well as any accreditation requirements built in somewhere in the curriculum other than the major.

It is unlikely that colleges will be inclined or permitted to allow students to designate an accredited program as a component of another, unaccredited degree. Although that college might decide it cannot “donate” second majors, it could elect (or not) to “receive” them, by permitting students to add them to the degree. Students who undertake such a program and fail to complete the professional degree would need to complete the degree requirements for what had been the second major if that becomes the only major.

**Two Majors and Overlap with General Education**

Currently, most students pursuing two majors are doing so in the Arts and Sciences. There, students are allowed, where possible, and with some limitations, to overlap courses on either major with course work required for the General Education program. Distribution limits on the number of courses from the area of the major that can be used on a related area of General Education are expanded, and courses can also be overlapped (when that is possible and with limitations) between majors. These efficiencies make it possible for students to complete two majors with a minimum of curricular complexity and often without taking an exceptional number of hours. In cases where this is not so, the exceptions have more to do with the size and disparity of the majors than with curricular obstacles. The Arts and Sciences rules governing two majors are included as an addendum, as points of reference and as a basis for further discussion and general consideration.

This proposal recommends that some latitude be extended to all students completing two majors. One goal of the General Education program is to guarantee breadth in an undergraduate education. Students completing a second major have exceeded this expectation in those areas of the curriculum relevant to either major, and it seems reasonable to allow course work taken for multiple majors to count toward the General Education requirements when the course work is appropriate. Although such efficiencies may limit, in some curricular areas, the broad sampling of disciplines for which General Education aims, there is an inherent breadth to the coverage within an undergraduate major, and any loss in overall breadth will be offset by the gains in strength and coherence that a second major will provide to a student’s program.

**Conclusion**

Adopting the policies in this proposal would not weaken undergraduate programs. Indeed, to the extent that it enabled more students with multiple academic interests and goals to complete a second major, it would broaden and strengthen those students’ programs.

Colleges would, of course, need to determine the way in which students completing their programs could feasibly participate in this wider access, and policies would need to be set and broadly communicated, to govern those decisions and advise students. At the most general level, each college would need to determine the following:

1. Does the college want to “donate” majors that could be added to other degrees? This will not be a feasible option, given accreditation issues, in some professional programs.
2. Does the college want to “receive” second majors, which its students would complete in other colleges, and permit the additional majors to be added to the college’s degree?
3. Does the college want to do both of the above?

**Addendum: College of the Arts and Sciences Requirements for Double Majors (on one degree)**

* The student must meet the requirements for each major as set by the department offering the major.
* Each major must contain a minimum of 18 semester hours not contained in the other. (As a practical consideration, particularly with regard to academic advising, it will be helpful to identify what constitutes the “major” in extended programs that are essentially degree programs, rather than simply a major.)
* Overlap with General Education may be permitted where appropriate.