

From: Fire Services Administration – (LaRon Tolley – 8-8697)
To: Curriculum Committee and Faculty Senate
Date: Winter 2011
Re: FSA Minor-Optional Proposal Summary

The following document is a REVISED submission of the proposal # P00324 from Fall 2009. The revisions address most/all the original concerns that were presented by Senate members during and following the very close split-vote rejection of the original proposal.

Proposal: Modifying the Fire Services Administration degree requirements to facilitate a “Minor Optional” track(s) to accommodate off-campus and transfer student access. On campus students and others, where appropriate, will still be encouraged / advised to complete a minor.

Reasoning: This is a specialized degree delivered primarily to mid-career adult learners typically pursuing their degree for advancement and/or promotional purposes. Mandatory minor requirements for part-time and off-campus students significantly delay degree completion times, decreases retention and WOU loses potential tuition revenue from every student.

Arguments supporting the request:

(1) Over 90% (66 of 73) of all FSA graduates over the past 10 years, were distance students that completed a WOU approved minor, however, these students took most or all the required minor coursework at or through other institutions. Many of these institutions do not allow “non-admitted” students to take upper division coursework.

(2) Statistical results from a 2007 graduate survey indicated that the completion of minor requirements and the subsequent articulation / transfer process was a significant and drawback to an otherwise valuable college experience for Fire Service Administration students.

(3) WOU is the only school among the seven National Fire Academy regionally affiliated Fire Service Administration schools that requires a minor.

(4) Of the 101 undergraduate institutions accredited by NWCCU, less than 10%, have mandatory minor requirements

(5) EOU, WOU's "cooperative partner" in the FSA program in Oregon, does not require a minor and in fact, uses this as a marketing / recruitment tool luring WOU admitted students into their program . . . (20+ students in the past two years.)

(6) Other degrees are offered at WOU that currently do not require a minor; a common characteristic of these degrees is that the major is already rigorous and diverse and requirement of a minor would be destructive to competitiveness for enrollment. . . the FSA program is in a similar situation and is losing the competition.

(7) The FSA major is strengthened and students have more opportunity to take WOU courses from other disciplines as well.

Summary: Making the MINOR requirement optional:

- enhances the major by allowing students to take more FSA courses beyond the current 48 upper division credit hours required, (***SEE ADDENDUM - attachment**)
- helps retain students and their tuition revenue at WOU
- results in students taking more WOU courses outside of FSA courses (ie. Online courses from disciplines that do not have a full minor available in alternative formats)
- provides a broader choice of content specific courses from all disciplines
- provides a clearer and shorter path for students from entry to graduation
- significantly reduces advising time and transfer approval processes
- does not set an unmanageable precedent as there is no other degree at WOU of similar content, student demographics, and delivery.
- allows existing minors to remain as an encouraged option for on-campus students