



320 STEPHENS HALL  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

May 20, 2010

HENRY POWELL  
Chair, Academic Council

*Subject: Proposal to expand the Area (d) laboratory science admission requirement to include Earth, Environmental, and Space Sciences (EESS)*

Dear Harry,

On May 17, 2010, the Divisional Council (DivCo) of the Berkeley Division discussed the proposal cited in the subject line, informed by the comments of the divisional committees on Admissions, Enrollment and Preparatory Education (AEPE), and Educational Policy (CEP).

DivCo declined to endorse the proposal. We found the arguments articulated by CEP persuasive:

While there is disagreement within CEP as to whether Area D should be restricted to fundamental science courses in chemistry, physics, and biology, or else include integrative sciences, there was widespread agreement that most earth sciences courses taught in California high schools do not meet the criteria for satisfaction of the Area D requirement. Moreover, there are already mechanisms in place for exceptional courses that do meet the criteria to be included in the Area D list. Therefore there does not need to be any modification of the Area D language.

DivCo acknowledged that the inclusion of EESS in the Area d courses would catalyze the development of more rigorous EESS courses at the high school level. We agreed with AEPE:


The proponents argue that schools have little incentive to develop such rigorous EESS courses that could satisfy area "d" under the current structure, but that they would be more willing to develop such courses if EESS were listed explicitly along with biology, chemistry and physics. Since so few rigorous courses exist now, this appears to be something of a "chicken or egg"

question: should UC wait until sufficiently rigorous EESS courses exist before listing this field as part of area “d”, or should UC explicitly identify EESS as a scientific discipline similar to those already listed based on the assumption that high schools will then develop sufficiently rigorous courses? BOARS argues for the former. The proponents of the current proposal argue for the latter. In any event, AEPE believes that a strong EESS curriculum must build on the more reductionist sciences of biology, chemistry and physics. As such, AEPE does not support a proposal that could allow students to replace one of the current course options with EESS.

If the number of area “d” units remains at 2 (two years of laboratory science), AEPE does not support including EESS explicitly in the list of lab sciences. On the other hand, if the number of area “d” courses could be increased from 2 to 3 (something that has been considered and rejected by BOARS recently), AEPE would support the explicit identification of EESS courses as being among those that satisfy this three year requirement. However, even if EESS were to gain this “status,” the courses that would qualify for Area “d” would have to be more rigorous than most currently offered in high schools.

In sum, we agree with the position adopted by the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools, and the University Committee on Educational Policy opposing the inclusion of EESS among courses satisfying the Area “d” requirement.

Sincerely,



Christopher Kutz  
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate  
Professor of Law, Jurisprudence and Social Policy Program

Cc: George Johnson, Chair, Committee on Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education  
Ignacio Navarrete, Chair, Committee on Educational Policy  
Anita Ross, Senate Analyst, Committee on Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education  
Elizabeth Wiley, Senate Analyst, Committee on Educational Policy