


March 13, 2015

Memorandum

TO: Executive Committee of the Academic Council

FROM: Sally Kornbluth, Provost 

SUBJECT: Master's degree in Analytical Political Economy

I am pleased to submit the accompanying resolution from APC regarding a new MA in Analytical Political Economy. The proposal was presented to the Academic Programs Committee on November 5, 2014 and was recommended for approval on December 17, 2014.

I submit this material to ECAC for discussion and consideration with my strong support.

SAK/bde  
Attachments

Academic Programs Committee, Subcommittee A  
Duke University

Resolution on the  
Master of Arts in Analytical Political Economy (MAPE) Proposal

Dec. 15, 2014

The APC has reviewed the proposal for a new Economics/ Political Science joint Master's degree program. APC met with Charles Becker, (Chair, Department of Economics) and Pablo Beramendi (Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Political Science) on November 5, 2014.

The proposed master's program grows from a demonstrated need to fill a growing demand at the convergence of the fields of political science and economics. It would rank among a select few such programs in the country including those at Caltech and Rochester. The proposed program has significant intellectual/educational value and demonstrated likely demand. APC was impressed by the clear synergies between economic and political science in the proposal and by the fact that MAPE students would be as quantitatively able as those who might take the just approved MS in Quantitative Financial Economics (MSQFE).

The new program will bring the total number of MA Econ programs to five, including the new MSQFE, three of which are offered jointly with other departments. MAPE would be the second Master's for the Political Science department. APC believes that MAPE program is sufficiently distinct from the other related Economics MA programs—Masters of Arts in Economics; Masters of Science in Economics and Computation, (MSEC); and Masters in Statistical & Economic Modeling (MSEM)—and the MA in Political Science to justify a separate program rather than a track.

The committee commends the Departments of Economic and Political Science for the considerable thought given to the intellectual and strategic rationale for the program and the effort to address the increasingly cross-disciplinary, pragmatic interests of a growing number of faculty and students in a non-PHD track program that supports a research-oriented jobs market

APC subcommittee A supports the proposed MAPE degree program and makes the following recommendations to the Provost.

- 1) The committee was impressed by the plan for management of the program but remains concerned about Political Science's ability to staff the new program and in particular, advise new students. Economics has two directors of graduate

studies and a separate admissions program while Political Science has one DGS. Even though unlike ECON, none of the masters students in Political Science serve as teaching or research assistants, APC would like to see more thought given to this issue in the planning process in advance of the program's growth.

- 2) The committee encourages the maintenance and promotion of existing joint colloquia between the faculty of the two departments and the use of MAPE as an opportunity to scale up cross-faculty and cross-student associations and other co-curricular frameworks that exploit the rich synergies of the two departments.
- 3) APC appreciates the written response from Becker and Beramendi to questions regarding remedial course work taken by current and past MA Econ students and that a few MAPE students will possibly need. We would encourage MAPE directors to continue to proactively engage with departments whose courses are taken by economics and political science students as remedial courses and are otherwise vital to the success of the masters' programs. We think that particular attention should be given to statistics courses given that 75 percent of graduate students in statistics courses are from other departments. APC discussed whether it would be advisable to seek letters of accommodation and support from the Department of Statistical Science and, perhaps, the Mathematics Departments as well. The committee also raised the question of whether programs like MAPE should be thinking about online content that students could access before coming to campus or "boot camps."
- 4) The committee is also interested in knowing whether any junior faculty will be part of the program, which it sees as relevant to planning for the future. No junior faculty members are currently represented on the list of faculty who will teach courses in MAPE.
- 5) After the initial APC discussion of MAPE, the subcommittee contacted its proposers to suggest that students in the new Master's program might benefit from elective courses in cognate social science disciplines, and to ask for an inventory of potential electives. APC notes the strong preference expressed by Professors Becker and Beramendi not to adopt a framework that mandates coursework outside of Economics and Political Science, for pragmatic reasons. They concede that exposure to history, sociology, AAAS, and public policy would offer instructive perspectives on analytical political economy. But they argue that while there is student interest in non-quantitative disciplines like Slavic Studies and courses on Marx, it would be difficult to design a framework that would meet the diverse needs of students or make sense for all students beyond possibly requiring that students take 6 credits outside of Economics and Political Science. They also express confidence that most students will take such courses. APC recommends that MAPE consider requiring at least one elective and that the director of the new Masters keep track of non-Political Science and non-Economics courses taken by MAPE students, so that the three-year review of the program can assess the extent to which MAPE students in fact take such electives.