Funding issue discussed by the Curriculum Council on 11/107/08
An issue exists within the budgeting model at Oregon State University related to funding of program management for interdisciplinary programs. Do we as a curriculum council feel that interdisciplinary programs are important enough that a clear funding model should be developed for such programs?
Below are excerpts for discussion from a proposed Category I for your review and starting point for the discussion.

Excerpts for Discussion from:
Proposal to Initiate a New Instructional Program for a Master of Natural Resources
September 2008
Oregon State University

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Program Overview
Managing natural resources is a complex problem involving production, ecological, social, economic and ethical systems, which affect and, in turn, are affected by the others. The proposed Master of Natural Resources (MNR) degree is designed to engage university scientists and world-wide natural resource professionals in a process that integrates diverse perspectives about natural resource situations at the state, regional, national, and international levels. The MNR degree will assist agency and industry personnel in meeting their self-improvement goals. It will be helpful to anyone looking for an advanced degree in natural resource management, especially people with at least two years of experience in one of the natural resource disciplines. The proposed 45-credit MNR curriculum is organized into three sections: core (18 credits), area of emphasis (18 credits), and independent study (9 credits). It will be taught as a distance, online curriculum, although it may be possible for some students to work toward the MNR degree while in-residence at Oregon State University (OSU). Most of the courses proposed for the MNR degree
are already taught both in-residence and online, although some modification to certain in-residence only courses will be necessary for them to be included in the proposed on-line curriculum. In addition, courses from the Natural Resources Distance Learning Consortium (Appendix E) can be used to augment course currently taught by OSU Extended Campus (Ecampus). Faculty members listed below already teach online courses at OSU and will be asked to serve on the Graduate Faculty of this degree program. The MNR degree will be offered as a non-thesis option only, similar to a Master of Business Administration, Master of Agriculture, or Master of Forestry.

The MNR degree will facilitate learning by natural resource professional men and women who work in settings that require integrating multiple disciplines to find solutions to natural resource issues. There is an increasing recognition that natural resource problems are multifaceted and complex. Thus, current disciplinary-based thinking must be complemented with knowledge about, and experience with, additional ways of framing and resolving problems. This type of learning methodology is not common in modern in-residence, university teaching, so pedagogical techniques that bring together new ideas, methods, and ways of thinking must be developed and tested. We intend to integrate multiple disciplines through the curriculum, assignments, and case study projects tailored to the student’s own design, student work groups and mentors, and evaluation of instruction. Students achieving the MNR degree will integrate concepts and approaches developed throughout the entire program into a final case study project. Students will also learn about the various disciplinary components that make up a natural resource problem and the solution to it.

None of the programs offered by the Oregon University System (OUS) provide for a graduate level curriculum in natural resources. Most programs that address issues and questions of natural resources are at minimum two-year degrees that require a thesis. The intensity, breadth, and integrative components of the proposed MNR make this a unique effort to OSU and within the OUS.

We base the need for the Master of Natural Resources degree on correspondence and inquiries from students about the Sustainable Natural Resources (SNR) Graduate Certificate. The SNR Graduate Certificate is an 18-credit program developed by OSU professors through grant funding from OSU Extended Campus. In the single year since SNR courses were initially offered in winter 2007, it successfully attracted graduate students from government, industry and the private sector, and inquiries from potential students in 31 states and 25 countries. Currently, there are 26 students enrolled in the SNR courses and 18 enrolled in the Certificate program. In addition there have been 154 inquiries to Ecampus and 54 additional inquiries to the College of Forestry about the Certificate. Most of these students inquire about further training such as an on-line Master of Natural Resources degree. At this time there is no degree program at OSU that satisfies this request, and only four online MNR programs exist in the entire country. Thus the intent of this proposal is to assist OSU in filling this instructional gap.

The combination of university personnel and other state-wide support puts OSU in a unique position to sponsor an MNR degree. For example, OSU is internationally recognized for its Land Grant University extension, research, and teaching in natural resources and ecology, as well as its National Sea, Space, and Sun Grant Programs. In addition, the State of Oregon is one of the first in the U.S.
implement forest practices laws, environmental protection, and comprehensive statewide land use planning legislation. Oregon Department of Forestry was the first state agency to use the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators sustainability framework to assess the status of forestlands across the state.

**Funding models**

We expect this degree to be funding neutral or to be profitable for all colleges and departments in the program. However, we propose three funding models for the MNR degree while the short term funding of the administrative costs of the MNR degree is being considered by Provost Randhawa and the academic Deans that are involved in this degree.

If neither option 1 or 2 are approved by OSU Central Administration by the conclusion of this Category I process, we will proceed with option 3 as our viable funding model for the administrative costs.

Option 1) Department revenue sharing:

We propose that online course tuition be shared among the participating Departments or Graduate Certificates according to the present Ecampus formula (Appendix A). In addition, to meet the overhead costs of the MNR degree we propose that tuition received from students in the MNR degree be allocated according to student-contact hour and funds be removed by Ecampus until overhead costs for administration of the MNR degree are met. Once administrative costs for the degree are achieved, proceeds from tuition will be allocated according to the existing Ecampus formula (Appendix A). A sample MOU is attached (Appendix F) that specifies this funding agreement. Although this was our proposed funding model for the MNR degree, some concerns were raised during the liaison process (Appendix C) and option 2 is proposed to accommodate those concerns.

Option 2) Department revenue share plus campus administration support:

In addition to department’s revenue and cost sharing, campus administration should provide some support since the MNR degree will benefit the entire OSU campus. This kind of support already exists for other interdisciplinary graduate programs on campus (e.g. Environmental Sciences). This is similar to option 1, except that campus administration provides a significant level of support (e.g. 50%) of the annual administrative costs of the MNR degree. We believe that all departments will agree to cost sharing of MNR administration under this option. The manner of funding the MNR degree and other online interdisciplinary degrees is the subject of discussion by the Provost and Deans of Colleges affected by the proposed degree (Appendix A). We expect to have the question of campus-wide support and financial sustainability of online interdisciplinary degree programs resolved by the completion of this Category I process.

Option 3) In the event of no resolution:

In the event no resolution is reached with options 1 or 2, we will proceed with option 3 for funding the short-term MNR administration costs. Departments that are unwilling to contribute to administrative overhead will be removed from the MNR program and their courses will be removed from the MNR curriculum. Students will select such courses from a list proposed by the Natural Resources Distance Learning Consortium for graduate education (Appendix E).