To: Marshall Eakin, Chair of A&S Faculty Council

From: George Becker, Chair of Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures

Date: November 1, 2010

Re: Recommendation to Faculty Council

The Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures met on Friday, October 29 from 1:00pm–2:00pm in room 121 Kirkland Hall. Committee members in attendance were Professors Michael L. Aurbach, George Becker, David E. Clifflé, Tim Hanusa, Matthew Ramsey, and Senior Associate Dean John M. Sloop (ex officio).

The Committee had only one item on its agenda. The A&S Faculty Council had charged CASP with reconsidering its recommendation regarding the double-counting of credits between two non-interdisciplinary majors. The Committee first addressed this issue in the spring semester of 2010 in response to a charge from the Committee on Educational Programs requesting CASP to consider codifying a policy regarding the number of hours that can be double-counted between non-interdisciplinary majors. As noted in the charge, unlike the existence of a regulation that stipulates a limit of six hours that can be double-counted between an interdisciplinary major and a non-interdisciplinary major, no policy has ever been formulated regarding two non-interdisciplinary majors. Following discussion of this charge, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the six-hour rule should also be applied to non-interdisciplinary majors. The Faculty Council subsequently approved the Committee’s recommendation, but the A&S faculty failed to do so, on the grounds that many students who double-major in two non-interdisciplinary majors would be adversely and unreasonably affected. In consideration of the faculty’s rejection, The Faculty Council decided to return the recommendation to CASP for further consideration.

The Committee’s discussion focused on three possible options for addressing the issue: 1.) propose a higher than six-hour “cap” for double-counting, 2.) propose a “floor” that stipulates a minimum number of “unique” hours (i.e., those offered within the major) that must be satisfied to meet the major requirement, or 3.) propose leaving the current practices in place, thereby allowing individual departments to set the limits for double-counting of hours.

While noting the appeal of the existing highly flexible arrangement, the Committee decided against support for option #3. Attention was drawn to data, provided by the A&S Registrar, indicating that some combinations of non-interdisciplinary majors can double-count up to 21 credit hours. As noted, the 21-hour figure is well in excess of the currently existing regulation governing minors, one that stipulates that “Each minor must…include at least 15 credit hours that are being counted solely toward the minor” (p. 72 of Undergraduate Catalog). This means, in effect, that some majors are actually easier to earn than a minor as a result of double-counting, a situation that was deemed unacceptable.
Consistent with this sentiment, the Committee decided that option #2, which calls for a minimum number of hours for a major, is best designed to protect the integrity of major programs. After further deliberation, the Committee voted unanimously to propose adoption of a rule that stipulates a minimum number of 24 credit hours that must be counted solely toward the non-interdisciplinary major. This rule is consistent with the spirit of the 15-hour regulation governing minors. As such, the Committee proposes that the following sentence be added to the end of the first paragraph under “Major Field” on p. 70 of the Undergraduate Catalog: “Each major must include at least 24 credit hours that are being counted solely toward the major.” It should be noted that adoption of this rule would apply also to students who combine an interdisciplinary major with a non-interdisciplinary major.