

Resolution on Updating and Making Transparent the University's Dual Degree and Double Major Policies¹ (Draft 2)

Background

The university's current Dual Major policy, available in the undergraduate catalog, states:

A student who officially declares and completes the requirements for two majors (a dual major) will receive one baccalaureate degree upon graduation. The primary major/degree (B.A., B.S., B.F.A.) will determine the actual degree awarded. The University does not officially recognize triple majors. Students who wish to complete two majors must obtain the approval of the two departments involved. There must be a significant difference between the major courses plus the required cognate courses of the two majors. Certain combinations of majors are not permitted.

During the Fall 2023 semester, APPC was contacted by interested parties who relayed concern about the lack of clarity and transparency in this policy. The APPC Co-Chairs contacted all Department Chairs asking for input. The most common concern was that the language in the policy is overly vague and leaves too many questions unanswered, such as, what constitutes a "significant difference between the major courses plus the required cognate courses of the two majors;" what "combinations of majors are not permitted," and for what reasons, and how should students obtain approval from the two departments involved?

During this process, APPC learned the policy was modified in 2020 by Academic Affairs, yet not published on the website. The 2020 policy reduced the required "significant difference" between two majors from 30 to 15 credits. The following language was taken from an email sent by Academic Affairs to the SAS, SOE, and SOB Deans in 2020 to indicate how the above policy should be interpreted:

Dual Major Policy Interpretation No. 1: When operationalizing the significant difference between the major courses plus the required cognate courses clause of the Dual Major Policy, 15 credits will be utilized to determine such difference.

Dual Major Policy Interpretation No. 2: Since the NYSED Childhood Education Teacher Certification regulations allow for the content core to consist of "a major, concentration, or the equivalent", concentration area courses in a Childhood Education or Exceptional Education degree shall not be considered to be required cognate courses in applying the Dual Major Policy.

¹ A dual degree consists of earning two credentials in distinct fields. A double major consists of one degree with two areas of specialization.

In their feedback to APPC, concerned parties noted that some of the concerns about vagueness in the original policy were not addressed. They also expressed concern about how the policy seems to conflate pursuing a dual degree (i.e., earning a BA and BS) with double majoring—for example, earning a BA in American Studies and a BA in History. They recommend the university create two distinct policies—one for *dual degrees*, and one for *double majoring*. APPC agrees with this recommendation. This concern, in addition to questions of how students should obtain approval for either a dual degree or double major, and which combinations of degrees are not allowed, provide rationale for the subsequent resolution.

The Resolution

Whereas SUNY Old Westbury’s “Dual Major Policy” was modified by administration in 2020, but most faculty, staff and students were not made aware of the modifications; and

Whereas the details of the policy are not available in the *Academic Policies and Procedures* section of the undergraduate catalog; and

Whereas many in the university community continue to follow the outdated policy, resulting in inconsistency; and

Whereas the updated policy fails to include specific guidelines around approval for a double major, and which double majors are prohibited, and why; and

Whereas there is no policy regarding Dual Degrees in the *Academic Policies and Procedures* section of the Undergraduate Catalog; and

Whereas earning a dual degree or double major allows students more opportunities, encourages the pursuit of distinct intellectual passions, and can help students prepare for and access a wider range of career opportunities;

Be it resolved that the university creates two distinct policies—one on dual degrees, and one on double majors; and

Be it resolved that both policies clearly indicate how students should go about obtaining permission for their chosen dual degree or double major; and

Be it resolved that students can apply to pursue a double major or dual degree by filling out a form on the Old Westbury Portal, which will automatically be sent to the Chairs of the respective departments involved for their approval; and

Be it resolved that a School or Department can add additional requirements to the process of obtaining approval for either a dual degree or double major; but in such cases, the process (including requirements and restrictions) *must* be indicated clearly on that School or Department's Website; and

Be it resolved that once the separate dual degree and double major policies are completed by administration, in consultation with faculty via the Faculty Senate, that they are both posted on the university's Academic Policies and Procedures Webpage, replacing the outdated statement that is currently posted; and, finally,

Be it resolved that once these two distinct policies are complete, they are also communicated to the campus community (faculty, staff and students) via email.