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Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2009 11:26 AM
To: Phyllis Lucie
Subject: General Studies Council request

The School of Earth and Space Exploration (SESE) seeks approval to allow all undergraduate students to "mix and match" the AST 111 and AST 112 lectures with the AST 113 and AST 114 labs to earn their SQ general studies credit.

How is "mix and match" beneficial to ASU students?

The AST 111 and AST 112 lecture courses are popular, but we lack the resources to offer (a) the AST 113 and AST 114 lab every semester and (b) a sufficient number of seats to cover the demand in the AST 113 or AST 114 lab that is offered. A mix and match strategy allows us to deliver the best product possible with our present resources. This, in turn, will allow more students to obtain their SQ credit through our astronomy courses.

Why was AST 111/113 and AST 112/114 so tightly coupled in the past?
What's changed?

Twenty year ago when there was only one solar system known it made sense intellectually to have a "planetary" course and a "stars & galaxies" course with their own labs as they were largely viewed as independent subjects. In addition, twenty years ago the number of students taking astronomy courses were matched with the available resources.

The discovery of planets orbiting other stars has been a large intellectual driver over the past 5 years in blurring the boundary between "planets" lecture+lab and "stars" lecture+lab courses across the country. The paradigm is changing and we have been participating in this trend. Finally, ASU's fantastic growth over the past 10 years combined with a static number of astronomy faculty has created an impedance mismatch between the number of students taking our astronomy lecture+lab courses and our available resources.

Could ASU/CLAS/SESE benefit financially by allowing a mix and match?

ASU, CLAS, and SESE will gain financially by driving efficiencies in our operations and by increasing the bandwidth through which more students can graduate.

By allowing more flexibility with a mix and match policy we will be able to serve more students. For example, students who work part-time to cover the cost of their education generally have scheduling conflicts with the available AST 113 and AST 114 labs as they take up a fair bit of time in the evenings.

At present, our unsanctioned yet de facto mix and match policy has several efficiency drawbacks. First, it increases the amount of paper work that the OSAP (Office of Student and Academic Programs) must complete, as each exception must be approved and entered into DARS (Degree Audit Reporting System). Second, it is unfair to students who do not know to ask for the exception. SESE seeks to make this opportunity available to all ASU students.

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