Joint Committee on Academic Planning (JCAP)
Thursday, May 19, 2016

3:00 PM, President’s Conference Room, Green Hall

Special Meeting to review a pre-proposal from the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business Administration, and the Library: BA, BS, and minor in Data Science

Summary of Notes

In attendance: Donald DeHayes, Provost and Chairperson, Linda Welters, Vice Chairperson, Marilyn Barbour, Laura Beauvais, James Kinnie, Kyle Kusz, Ann Morrissey, and George Tsiatas.

Professors Joan Peckham, Computer Science and Statistics, and Julia Lovett, Library provided an overview of their proposal for a BA, BS, and a minor in Data Science and described connections between the proposed programs and the JCAP rubric. The presenters indicated that the proposed programs were consistent with URI strategic priorities, had a strong connection to workforce needs, and would be of high interest to students.

There was unanimous support for moving the development of the proposal forward.

Feedback & Considerations from Committee
Data ethics could be a grand challenge course relative to all students.
Philosophy 212 is a possibility.

Library course on digital information may have some potential opportunity for collaboration.

Also, HIPAA and FERPA may also provide a fit or connection to a thematic area within the program.

Recommendation to consider integrating history courses for BS relative to the limits of data journalists/analysts and the potential for social history and its relevance to the field prospects to avoid field vacuum approach.
Consider the use of professional electives that relate to a major but not part of a core for the major.

Question to consider: how does an inherently interdisciplinary major accommodate varying paths of entry and respond to different professional goals and interests? The development of tracks would be a way to address this point. Framing advising in such a way to best support such a program.

Consider what number of new tailored courses is sufficient to effectively support a new degree programs. How might cross-coded courses be integral to major and be leveraged?

Consider how the 8 new big data faculty currently being hired could be leveraged in this program and other positions such as biostatistics, health epidemiology, etc.

With regard to the question if the degree could require the student to have a minor (any field): A professional track could be proposed through their advisor as an option. Or, a minor could be strongly encouraged by the department, but either way, it should be done with a strong statement about the rationale for such an urging or requirement. Caution is urged about the number of credits that would be required from a student, so as not to make the degree unreasonably difficult to achieve.

Continue to look at other new similar programs and how they are structured and what they encompass.

Create DSI course code.

Create learning outcomes so the BA and BS can be differentiated as well as the learning goals of each.