PUBLIC HEARING
October 1, 2008 (Wednesday)

Proposal: Merger of The Unit for Cinema Studies (LAS) and the Program in Media Studies (MEDIA) into the Department of Media and Cinema Studies (MEDIA)

MEETING SUMMARY

Speakers/Participants
Abbas Aminmansour, Chair Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Cliff Christians, Director Institute of Communications Research
Ronald Jackson, Associate Dean, College of Media
Karen Carney, Associate Dean, Liberal Arts and Sciences
Sarah Projansky, Associate Professor Cinema Studies/Gender and Womens’ Studies Program
Ramona Curry, Associate Professor in English and Affiliate Professor in Cinema Studies
Richard Leskosky, Interim Director, Unit for Cinema Studies
Kristi Kuntz, Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education

Welcome to attendees (from Abbas Aminmansour, Chair Senate Committee on Educational Policy)
(The Hearing is taped and will have web access, so that the public, those not attending, can view and hear the proceedings.)

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy received a proposal for the merger of the Unit for Cinema Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Institute of Communications’ Media Studies program (housed in the College of Media). Plans are to merge the two programs, with the outcome of a Department of Media and Cinema Studies. The Public Hearing is a required element of the Senate Rules for program mergers.

Also attending and invited to speak were representatives for the College deans (Media and Liberal Arts and Sciences) and other members of faculty, administration and the public.

The College of Media’s Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, Ronald Jackson commented on the College of Media’s excitement about the unfolding of important events—the development of the College of Media to a four-year college; the prospect of developing a film center; and now the College’s proposal for the Cinema/Media Studies merger. College of Media faculty and administration are looking forward to the assimilation of new students and faculties resulting from a merger of the units.
Interim Director for the Unit of Cinema Studies, Richard Leskosky indicated his support for the proposal as well as the support of the Cinema Studies faculty and affiliates (zero percent appointees) who are all looking forward to serving the needs of the students under the new configuration.

On the prospect of a successful merger, Cliff Christians, the Director of the Institute of Communications Research (the academic home of the College of Media’s Media Studies Program), gave a warm welcome to prospective new faculty on behalf of the Institute and the College of Media.

The Media Studies degree was first established in 1984 within a two-year bachelor’s degree program. Now, for the first time, the College of Media has admitted the first freshman class, with the prospect of Media Studies being organized as a department. During the same time of establishing the new department, the recommendation is to move Cinema Studies into the College. Soon thereafter, and at an appropriate time, the initiation of a new Film Center for the College of Media will move forward. The rationale for this plan was unanimously approved at every level. Two different College of Media/Unit for Cinema Studies working groups unanimously, throughout the process, approved and endorsed in a June 29 and an October 16 report, pursuing a merger of the two concentrations (without any dissent of any of the Colleges or Units (ICR Media Studies/College of Media; Unit for Cinema Studies/LAS; Linguistics/LAS).

Dr. Christians reasoned that the educational rationale for the merger can be supported since Cinema Studies’ focus today is not only films, but is, pedagogically, multi-faceted within the world of Media. Dr. Christians said that there is unanimous agreement the rationale is compelling—the programs, though merged, would remain competitive among the humanities programs.

Professor Abbas Aminmansour announced that the proposal will be on the Ed Policy October 13 meeting agenda, and at that time, it is possible there may be a vote on the merger. If anyone wishes to attend, the committee meets from 1:10 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. in Room 232 English Building. If the merger is approved at that meeting, then the proposal goes to the Senate in early November. Then, if passed by the Senate, the proposal goes to the University Senate Conference, where it is looked at from a global perspective. The last groups reviewing the proposal will be the University Board of Trustees, and in the end, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE).

Next, Professor Aminmansour opened the discussion for questions from the floor.

Ramona Curry, an associate professor in English and an affiliate professor in Cinema Studies, expressed approval for the merger. She noted that she has vigorously opposed several previously proposed mergers of Cinema Studies with other units within LAS.

Professor Curry explained that over the past five or six years, Cinema Studies has acquired several line-weight faculty appointments to the Unit, in addition to a number of 0% affiliates. However, Professor Curry is concerned that the merger may have an impact on the long-standing strength of Cinema Studies to attract the collaboration of many other faculty members from across LAS and the campus. As an
umbrella organization, Cinema Studies has been able to attract affiliate faculty with expertise in various disciplines. There are approximately 23 affiliates (of whom 19 are tenure track faculty, three are Academic Professionals, and one is non-tenure track faculty) many grounded in FLB (scholars of Italian, French, etc.), where the Unit originated more than 30 years ago.

Professor Curry believes, too, it may be difficult to maintain cross-college affiliations. She differs on the theory that Cinema Studies is merging closely with Media Studies. Film has gone through various changes, but Cinema Studies remains very broad as a discipline, including an interest in the circulation of a film and its cultural implications—this is not necessarily the same approach taken in the social sciences that characterize traditional media studies. She believes Cinema Studies to be much more based in the humanities thus the merger has aroused discomfort among her cinema-affiliated English colleagues, where film study connects them academically. She feels studies in cinema do not usually employ statistical or survey based models, but rather draw on more abstract cultural and critical theory approaches.

Subsequently, what are the structural conditions built in that will maintain collegial-level relations for the sub-set of faculty that will remain in the LAS departments? Another concern is, the English Department currently offers 10-12 film studies courses a year, that are cross-listed with Cinema Studies. What will happen to the cross-listings when courses are anchored in Media? There are a number of English majors who are pursuing a minor in Cinema Studies. These students will want to feel connected. How will this relationship be maintained?

Dr. Cliff Christians responded that there is a trend towards Cinema Studies being encompassed in multi-faceted Media; however it is not exclusive, but a trend. Dr. Christians does not believe that this trend eliminates the existing framework of Cinema Studies. He agrees that cross-cultural affiliation is hugely important. For some time now, the College of Media has maintained faculty appointments from Cinema Studies. The last thing the College of Media would want is to disenfranchise the program. The College of Media honors cross-affiliation and its administration does not wish to narrow the program to an exclusive domain. The minors will not change, but will remain.

Professor Aminmansour inquired whether there has been discussion at the College level about the future status of College faculty outside of Media. LAS Associate Dean Karen Carney confirmed that the proposal indicates that there will need to be discussions with the two colleges and the Provost’s office regarding faculty lines.

Unit for Cinema Studies Interim Director Richard Leskosky added that zero-percent affiliate faculty would be invited to hold a similar appointment in the College of Media and that courses would continue to be cross-listed.

Professor Ramona Curry inquired about the status of English 104 “Introduction to Film”, which is cross-listed with Cinema Studies but anchored within the English Department. Karen Carney responded that English 104 would remain in LAS.
Cinema Studies Associate Professor, Sarah Projansky, commented that the proposal does not specifically mention English 104, but the option for students will be to take a certain number of courses. Once all major courses have been established following the merger, it is expected that every single English film studies course that is currently cross-listed with Cinema studies will count towards the new major.

Professor Curry further commented on curriculum issues and decisions by voting faculty that may result in low student numbers in some courses. Being a zero percent faculty member with voice, but not having voting privileges, creates anxiety that LAS 0% Cinema faculty might later find a previously well-filled course half-empty.

Professor Aminmansour asked if students who have already entered the Minor in Cinema Studies will be able to complete their program. Professor Christians responded that they will. Professor Aminmansour stated that regardless of the merger, any student currently pursuing a minor should be able to complete their program.

Professor Cliff Christians relayed that there will be two (2) minor concentrations—a graduate and an undergraduate. The plan is to bring along both minors without interruption or irregularities.

Professor Aminmansour announced to all to feel free to send him additional comments by letter or e-mail (aamin@illinois.edu) by Friday, October 3.

For clarity, Professor Aminmansour summarized there will be additional proposals put forward, presuming the approval of Proposal #1 (the subject of this hearing). Proposal #2, requests approval for the newly formed department to offer a revised B.S. degree in Media and Cinema Studies with two concentrations: Media Studies and Cinema Studies. The Proposal #3 request is for permission to slightly modify the current undergraduate minor in Cinema Studies and transfer it to the newly formed department. Proposal #4 seeks to transfer the graduate minor in Cinema Studies without modification to the newly formed department. The College of Media has requested consideration of these proposals, if the re-organization proposal is approved. Aminmansour noted that while changes in curricula are within the charge of the Educational Policy Committee, transfer of programs is not within their jurisdiction.

Associate Dean Ronald Jackson recapped that part of what is meant about Media Studies in relation to Cinema Studies is that cinema studies can be broader—that there are multiple ways to approach the study of cinema and its relevance and place in Media. The move will mean two (2) concentrations and will allow faculty to maintain those multiple approaches and not necessarily result in a more narrow approach. He emphasized that the graduate and undergraduate minor is intact, and will be adjusted accordingly for the merger.

Dr. Christians asked Cinema Studies Associate Professor Sarah Projansky to speak to the trend of Cinema Studies becoming more intertwined with Media Studies. Sarah acknowledged that Ramona Curry was the senior in the field and that their approach to study in cinema was similar. ICR’s Media Studies
faculties present an excellent scholarly association; however they do not do work on following these trends.

Professor Projansky added, in light of advanced technology, there is common argument about how film is delivered and whether cinema, as previously defined, exists. The new department will provide a venue for that research.

Ramona Curry followed with an inquiry of ICR’s relationship, in whole, in the College of Media and how ICR will relate to the proposed Roger Ebert Film Center—whether it will be a separate entity from the Campus or will it be a unit intrinsic to the University. What are the structural implications? Her concern is that Cinema Studies does not become, or be perceived as subservient to the other studies. She believes, too, that the new program organization also has potential for LAS faculty with zero percent affiliation or a non-regular faculty line to be left out “in the cold” in future cinema studies teaching and collegial connections on campus.

Dr. Christians responded that the ICR Director has the responsibility of developing Media Studies and Cinema Studies as a department. The question of where ICR students fit within the College following the merger is still unsettled. Also the relationship of the proposed Ebert Film Center to ICR is still in question; however, the location of it in the College of Media is established. The extent of collegial faculty connections to the Center has not yet been pursued. There have been no decisions to determine exactly how the Ebert Film Center will be connected to the Media and Cinema Studies Department. It is expected that cross-college listings will be maintained.

LAS Associate Dean Karen Carney asked if there had been specific plans for inviting the current zero-percent faculty to join the new department? Dr. Christians responded that faculty with appointments now will constitute the faculty to be. He emphasized that the program is not changing, but the curriculum is being put into a concentration of its own identity. The current faculty and governing structure now constitutes this department. (Cinema Studies now has 2 FTE (0.5 of that line to be moved—needs to be clarified, per comment from the audience regarding director line and budget implications. [Professor Curry further explains: When the discussion of the merger began, the Unit for Cinema Studies had 2 FTEs (including three 0.5 FTEs and two 0.25 FTEs, but that due to subsequent departure from campus of two .5 faculty and shifts in affiliation of the two .25 faculty, only .5 FTE of Cinema Studies is actually in process of moving into the new College of Media department. Pending is, which College will acquire the remaining “unoccupied” 1 FTE currently in Cinema Studies? As Professor Aminmansour noted, the two Colleges will have to clarify this matter with the Provost.)]}

Professor Sarah Projansky added that processes have begun for movement of administrative positions, but has not flowed through to completion.

Professor Aminmansour added that this must be worked through between the two Colleges and with the Provost’s office.

Professor Aminmansour summarized the discussions of the public hearing as follows:
1. The proposal under consideration addresses the merger of the Unit for Cinema Studies and the Program in Media Studies in to the proposed new Department of Media and Cinema Studies only, and does not have any impact on degrees or minor programs already in place.

2. Faculty currently having zero percent appointments with the Unit for Cinema Studies will be invited to become zero percent affiliates of the proposed department.

3. Cross-listed courses offered by the current units will remain intact.

4. The relationship of ICR and the Ebert Film Center within the College of Media is still under discussion. This matter is internal to the College.

Professor Aminmansour expressed that it was important for those in attendance to leave with clarity (correct impressions) on the issues.

Professor Richard Leskosky asked when the merger may become effective. Per Professor Aminmansour, if approved at the October 13 Ed Policy meeting, and proposals are submitted to the Senate for the early November meeting, then the proposal may be on the Board of Trustee's doc for the January 2009 meeting. It’s all about the time sequence (when proposals are submitted and approved).

Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education, Kristi Kuntz, will issue the formal letter explaining the processes—until we get the letter from Kristi Kuntz, there should be no reference to the merged programs as being a new department—this would include web sites or references in other printed materials—not until the approval process is entirely completed. It can be assumed that this will be beyond spring 2009.

Dean Karen Carney added that there are decisions that must be made now for next semester regarding staffing of courses, etc., and these will have to be addressed in the meantime. Professor Aminmansour concurred that final approval may be by fall semester or beyond. In any case, a letter will come from Kristi Kuntz.

Senate Committee Educational Policy Chair, Abbas Aminmansour, thanked all speakers for their participation, and reminded everyone to send additional comments to him by letter or e-mail by October 3, for timely distribution to Committee members. If you wish, you may request that your comments remain confidential and that your name be removed. If requested, Professor Aminmansour will remove your name.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted: Rhonda Kornegay, Administrative Aide
College of Media