

April 1, 2014

Dear Academic Senate,

As a board member of the Human Development Alumni Chapter and continuous advocate of the major, I was recently given a copy of the proposal to reduce the Human Development Major by eliminating the Children's Services and Adult & Gerontology Services concentrations. After carefully reviewing the proposal, I have concern over the reasons given in support of this action and how this decision will impact the growth of the major.

Children's Services emphasis:

"The number of students in the Children's Services concentration, as shown in Table 2, reveals the popularity of this concentration. Repeated assessments have revealed that students in this concentration tend to have interests in child care, education, health, and counseling. The Department of Psychology has received approval for a bachelor's degree program in Child and Adolescent Development (CHAD). The CHAD program has considerable overlap with the Children's Services concentration; however, it will include the specific education required for employment in child care settings. This will be an attractive alternative for students who are interested in child care. Students in this concentration who are interested in education, health, and counseling will benefit from the Department of Human Development's increased attention to the development of courses specifically designed for the Human Development major."

As a Human Development alumna with a Children's Services emphasis, I can speak from a student's perspective on what makes this emphasis attractive. Prior to declaring a major, the one thing I was clear of was that I wanted to be a part of the solution to help at-risk youth and other vulnerable populations. This desire was not to be a teacher, counselor, health or child care professional. I wanted to work in or with the foster youth system. With guidance from a counselor at Palomar College we examined different degree options, including psychology and sociology without much interest. Although I like aspects of both of those fields, I was not very interested in research. I got excited about completing my BA once I learned about the Human Development major. I found the interdisciplinary approach and focus on the human lifespan intriguing. But what really sold me on the major was the Children's services emphasis. I would not have chosen this major without it. While serving on the HD alumni chapter board of directors for the past 9 years, I have heard a lot of stories very similar to mine. I have honestly never heard of someone selecting this emphasis to go into child care. Many have gone into child advocacy careers, such as: social work, teaching, and law. The popular former-foster youth program on our campus, ACE scholars has hired 2 of our alumnae whom went on to earn MSW degrees.

I feel it would be more beneficial for the college to strengthen this emphasis which is a feeder into their MSW and teaching credential programs. This action may increase the enrollment numbers into other programs, such as CHAD, but I strongly feel that it would be doing a disservice to the students who want the emphasis and to the Department of Human Development.

Adult & Gerontology Services Concentration:

“There are few courses that specifically address the broad concept of adult or gerontology services on campus. This concentration has had the least attention from students and faculty as reflected in the enrollment figures. Only one course has been developed by the Department of Human Development to support this concentration and it has only been submitted as a Topics course (never taught). Only one course is unique to this concentration and it is taught by another department (SOC427). Thus, while there will be no change to the HD offerings, discontinuing the Adult & Gerontology Services concentration would impact the Sociology Department’s enrollment of SOC427.

Since the Department of Human Development does not offer any courses that are specific to this concentration, current Adult & Gerontology Services students would continue on their current plans. Students who have not already selected this concentration would not be able to select it.”

I have always respected the major for holding onto this concentration even with low interest by the students. While the numbers are small, the need is great. While assisting with the development of the Master of Social Work program, I learned so much about this subject and how the perception needs to change to increase the growth of this field. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “employment of social and human service assistants is projected to grow 22 percent from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations. Growth will be due to an increase in the elderly population and rising demand for health care and social services.” As an institution which strives to meet the needs of its region and is the home for the Institute of Palliative Care, it would seem imperative to increase resources for our gerontology/older adult programs, not eliminate them.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I truly hope the Academic Senate and Provost Oberem will reconsider making the proposed changes to a vibrant and thriving major. Instead, please work with the department to grow its concentrations to meet the university and regional needs.

Sincerely,

Dayleen Coleman
Human Development Alumnus ‘05