

Governors State University

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Faculty Senate Minutes

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3-25-2021

### University Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes - March 25, 2021

University Curriculum Committee

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Governors State University

University Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

March 25, 2021 Zoom 12:00-2:00 PM

- I. Call to Order and Approval of Agenda 12:02 PM  
Members in attendance: Catherine Tymkow, Matthew Cooney, Sanghoon Lee, Megan McCaffrey, Roberta O'Shea, Lisa Pennington, Nafees Qamar, Ujvala Rajadhyaksha, Cynthia Romanowski, Uday Shinde, Ellie Walsh  
Members absent: Shirley Spencer
- II. Review of February 25, 2021 Approved with correction to attendance, approved unanimously  
March 11, 2021 minutes; Approved unanimously
- III. **Syllabi reviewed**
  - A. Certificate Data Analytics – No response
  - B. BA Math – No response
  - C. Middle Grade Science – No response
  - D. MS Biology Teacher Ed – No response
  - E. Secondary Biology – No response
  - F. Secondary Chemistry – Approved
  - G. CPSC/ART 4569 – Approved all modalities
  - H. SOCW 8210- Approved
  - I. SOCW 8510- Approved
  - J. SOCW 8601- Approved
  - K. SOCW 8701- Approved
  - L. CPSC 6780-Returned
  - M. SOCW 3000- Returned, no response
  - N. SOCW 4000- Returned, no response
  - O. CPSC-4790: Approved
  - P. IT-4455: Approved
  - Q. MATH-4240: Approved
  - R. MATH-6240: Approved
  - S. MATH-6171: On Hold for Undergraduate
- IV. **Syllabi not reviewed**
  - A. MATH-6229
  - B. MATH-6337
  - C. SOCW-3104
  - D. MATH-8623
  - E. ECON-4101
  - F. Coun-6610
  - G. Coun-6638
  - H. Couns-7730
  - I. Couns-7810
  - J. EDAD- 7801
  - K. EDAD-7803
  - L. EDAD-7902

- M. EMED-3199
- N. EMED-3321
- O. EMED-3333
- P. Psych-3680
- Q. Psych-3820

**V. OTHER:**

A. Re: Plus/Minus grading samples. Thanks to ad hoc committee of: Nafees Qamar, Matthew Cooney, Ujvala Rajadhyaksha, and Ellie Walsh for additional input and wordsmithing accompanying narrative.

B. Thanks to Lisa for CCC checklist submission and this item was sent to the UCC committee for review.

C. Question raised re: syllabus template at Faculty Senate:

The question raised at Faculty Senate was that if UCC “does not care” about everything on the syllabus, then why does faculty have to use the syllabus template? The implication was that not including all the parts of the template would speed the review process and would preserve components of individual faculty’s academic freedom.

UCC appreciated the intent of the question coming from Faculty Senate. At the same time the committee was concerned that the phrase “does not care” was based on an incomplete understanding of UCC’s purpose and role. In the curricular approval process, the UCC committee acts as a liaison between DCCs/CCCs (faculty bodies) and the Provost’s office (an administrative body). It deals with curricular resources that typically have multiple stakeholders beyond Unit A faculty, such as students, staff, the Provost’s office, IBHE and other external regulatory agencies, such as the HLC. For example, the HLC, during its re-accreditation visit, expressed concern over whether online and f2f versions of courses provided sufficiently similar learning experiences for students (an issue related to both rigor and equity). This has led UCC to pay more attention to such proposals, given its assumption that, on its next visit, the HLC will check whether GSU will have addressed its feedback on that issue.

UCC’s work is facilitated when the entire context of the course (e.g., level of assignments, course learning outcomes) is available for review, beyond the minimum requirements stated in the syllabus template. This larger context better allows UCC to fulfill its obligations as articulated in Policy 2 & 3—obligations it considers as some of the most important elements of faculty governance of academic matters. UCC requires strong, clear SLOs not only to confirm that they clearly communicate to students which skills the faculty/program expect them to develop in the course, but also so that faculty can use those SLOs to identify which types of assessments can best measure the degree to which students developed those skills. The increased attention to assessment to which GSU has committed suggests that this is a timely matter.

UCC is aware of the balancing act it plays as the bridge between faculty and administration. It recognizes the need for academic freedom and, in that regard, does

not change those components that are unique to programs/courses or that can be included in the syllabus but do not fit within the purview of UCC. It is perhaps in this context that the somewhat misleading phrase “does not care” gets voiced. However, the syllabus template (approved by Faculty Senate) standardizes specific elements of content across university courses, and this is where UCC’s work frequently gets slowed down because of missing or unclear details required in that template. To avoid such delays, the UCC requests that originators and DCCs more diligently review proposals for the required elements, taking advantage of the resources available on the UCC website. This would make UCC’s review process less time-consuming and less frustrating for all parties. Currently, UCC spends too much time correcting errors or omissions that should have been caught at lower levels of review. For example, when programs send undergraduate and graduate versions of courses, the SLOs and assignments frequently do not clearly and/or substantively differentiate between the standards and expectations of undergraduate- and graduate-level work. This requires the UCC to send the submission back to the originators, which delays approval. Currently, in the spirit of cooperation and collegiality, UCC frequently addresses and corrects some errors and omissions, such as unclear outcome objective language, to avoid the additional delays that would result if it were to summarily reject or return the proposals to the originators.

UCC has no desire to interfere with the academic freedom of any member of the faculty. We *are* faculty and fully appreciate the importance of academic freedom. We see all faculty as participants in our shared educational endeavor at GSU. In the spirit of shared governance, UCC’s specific role has been designated as providing oversight of the approval process and assisting fellow faculty and programs in producing strong, clear syllabi and program proposals that reflect the rigor and substance so critical to the success of students, the faculty, and the institution itself.

Based on the discussion, UCC makes the following suggestions / recommendations:

1. A DCC/CCC chair orientation and/or invitation to DCC chairs to attend a UCC meeting to allow for questions and suggestions for us.
2. Distribution and posting of the DCC checklist (attached) drafted by UCC member, Dr. Lisa Pennington.
3. See additional details on UCC’s role and charge on the Faculty Senate’s UCC page.

D. Spring Meeting dates: April 8, 2021; April 22, 2021; May 13, 2021.

**Adjourned: 2:30 PM**