Undergraduate Studies Committee

Tuesday, September 26, 2023
12:45 p.m. Online via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Attending Voting Members: Promila Dhar (BME), Jim Edwards (ROTC), David Gidalevitz (PHYS), Boris Glavic (CS), Erin Hazard (HUM), Steve Kleps (CAEE), Kathiravan Krishnamurthy (FDSN/Vice Chair), Eva Kultermann (ARCH), Nicole Legate (PSYC), Yuting Lin (BIOL), Yuri Mansury (SSCI), David Maslanka (AMAT), Erdal Oruklu (ECE), Victor Perez-Luna (CHBE), Ray Trygstad (ITM/Secretary), John Twombly (SSB), Murat Vural (MMAE), Fred Weening (Chair), Ben Zion (CHEM)

Also Attending: Roland Calia (SSB), Ken Christensen (Provost), Jennifer deWinter (LCHS), Natalia Gallardo (Registrar), Joseph Gorzkowski (UGAA), Kyle Hawkins (AMP), Mary Haynes (UGAA), Pam Houser (INTM), Jasmine Johnson (UGAA), Melanie Jones (Armour Academy), Mahesh Krishnamurthy (Kaplan), Christopher Lee (Registrar), Melisa Lopez (Student Success & Retention), Gabriel Martinez (Armour Academy), Abby McGrath (Enrollment Services), Nick Menhart (CCAC), Jamshid Mohammadi (GSC/CLI), Kathleen Nagle (ARCH), Nichole Novak (Libraries), Shamiah Okhai (LCSL), Joseph Orgel (VPAA), Hannah Ringler (HUM/CAC), Zipporah Robinson (Academic Success), Gabrielle Smith (UGAA), Kathryn Spink (Past Chair), Mary Jorgenson Sullivan (ELS), Liad Wagman (SSB/CSL)

1. **Approval of minutes from the 9/5/23 and 9/12/23 meetings.**
   Eva Kulterman moved for approval of the 9/5/23 minutes and Murat Vural seconded.
   Boris Glavic moved for approval of the 9/12/23 minutes and Kathiravan Krishnamurthy seconded.
   A single vote was taken and both sets of minutes were approved unanimously.

2. **Updates from Academic Affairs.**

   Joseph Orgel yielded to floor to Provost Ken Christensen, whose edited remarks follow:
   As you may have heard in the Town Hall meeting, one of the important activities that we'll be undertaking on our campus is a comprehensive review of the core curriculum. We are working with our academic and administrative leadership in these domains to define a task force of faculty and staff that will undertake a very critical and comprehensive review of the core curriculum. It's certainly time that we do this, but it is also timely that we do this when we're really rallying around some core foundational principles we want our students to graduate from Illinois tech with, such as baseline knowledge and understanding and ability to use things like entrepreneurial mindset, data science principles, concepts of design, leadership, and ethics, in addition to the foundational core curriculum needs of soft skills related to communication, collaboration, and and the like. This task force will develop recommendations on renovations to the core to better meet these purposes. I just wanted to come today and provide that context. This is going to be at least a year long activity, to really bring all stakeholders together around a common approach to the core. Please be assured that we will have representation from all corners of the academic enterprise, from administrative units for which the core curriculum is is really critical, and we'll be seeking broad community feedback on approaches that we can take to modernize and and renovate the core as it relates to building a set of common threads amongst the education of all of our undergraduate students, regardless of of their major.

   My second comment—and then I'm happy to answer any questions you might have—is I understand today, you're going to be discussing a proposal to create a new minimum credit hour requirement for undergraduate degrees. And I believe this is a a good thing for us to be considering. It's a minimum, and so it does not lock anyone in from having to necessarily meet that requirement, but it will place us in a better competitive marketplace with respect to recruiting learners. I'm not advocating for a reduction in credit hours; I want to make that very, very clear. But if any were to naturally happen due to finding synergies in different ways, for example, that we might teach math and data science in a combined way, instead of stacking these as separate sorts of requirements, then obviously this is a way to find

efficiency. I just wanted to thank you for having this discussion around the 120 credit hour minimum, I think it is a really important one for us as an institution. Thanks for lending me a few minutes.

There were no questions for the Provost following his remarks.

Joseph Orgel's remarks in summary:
I want to echo Ken's remark and speak in favour of the setting of a new minimum, which makes us more competitive. And ultimately it will improve the use of our time with the students in a thoughtful way, to get to what's really important, and to put that forward in really good packages. This should improve a student's quality of life and their happiness with us.

I wanted to to not use up much time, knowing that we have relatively light business for this meeting. Rather than going through all of the remarks I had for this meeting, I'd just like to mention that we're going to put forward a number of proposals for additional language in the Bulletin for some things, taking things that are current practice and articulating and formally publishing that practice. We expect that the majority of them are informational, so we will put the draft language in front of you, and we'll say we think this is informational. One is very simple, and it's live right now: for Coursera grading, if there's ever any doubt between the Coursera system and our database system, our database system takes precedence as to what grades are. Finally I intend to ask UFC to formally endorse the idea of the task force to lend ourselves to one collaborative effort rather than lots of disparate efforts. I yield any time remaining over, pending any questions.

There were no questions for Joseph Orgel following his remarks.

3. **Schedule of periodic review of degree programs.**

   This is year three of the plan created by UGSC for annual program reviews. The departments due to be reviewed in year three are Math, ITM, INTM, CS and Business, and because it was not done last year as scheduled, Chemistry will be included as well. Each departments to be reviewed needs to complete the Periodic Review Form at https://ugsc.iit.edu/documents/2021-2022/UGSC-Periodic-Curricular-Review-Form.pdf. One form needs to be completed and submitted for each degree in the department. There was a reminder that the review form required confirmation that assessment is being conducted for each program, and this is why a form must be submitted for each degree program.

4. **Continued discussion of 120 credits as minimum required credits for undergraduate degree program proposal.**

   Jennifer deWinter briefly reviewed the proposal. Joseph Orgel noted that this change was considered when creating the degree Incubator program but they did not follow thouh on it out of concern that this might have been too much all at once. Kathryn Spink supported the change to 120 hours minimum and suggested that perhaps we give the effort some teeth by requiring every unit to have at least one program that meets that minimum. Jamshid Mohammadi concurred that this is the right direction and suggested one easy way to reduce hours would be allow a course in a department to count as a second Interprofessional Projects (IPRO) course. Ray Trygstad pointed out that for programs with free electives that were part of the program just to force the hours to 126, some of those electives could easily be removed to allow the hours to be be reduced to 120, but Joseph Orgel pointed out that free electives give students choices and scheduling flexibility, and that having free electives in any program hugely improves the outcomes for the students. Boris Glavic noted that the B.S. in Computer Science is very full and it might be difficult to reduce hours without changes to the core curriculum. Jennifer deWinter noted that the idea of requiring a 120 program was just a suggestion and is not part of the proposal, and Boris noted that with that, he supported the proposal to allow the minimum for degrees to be 120 hours.

   Nick Menhart asked, in the interest of making data-driven decisions, if Academic Affairs could supply some figures on how many students are in programs with free electives. Josep Orgel replied that that could be done.

The Chair asked for a motion for UGSC to endorse the proposal to reduce the required hours for Bachelor's degree completion to 120 hours, and forward that endorsement to the University Faculty Council. It was noted that this would be a significant change and would probably go before a faculty Town Hall.

Ray Trygstad moved to endorse this proposal to reduce the required hours for Bachelor's degree completion to 120 hours, and the motion was seconded by David Gidalevitz.
The motion passed unanimously with a vote of 15-0.

5. **Other Business.**

Kathryn Spink noted that we tabled further discussion of the proposed changes to Humanites requirements and Communications course requirements as a part of the change to the Core Curriculum, but as a member of the the Core Curriculum Assessment Committee, this committee needs the proposed changes to learning objectives to support assessment in these areas. She noted that while we did not need to to it today, the UGSC needed to consider those as some point in the future.

Joesph Gorzkowski of Academic Affairs noted that he had figures on how many students did not test out of COM 101 and that the figure in the last four years was 8.4%. Nich Menhart asked if year-by-year data could be supplied and Joseph replied yes. This data is presented here.

Freshmen Cohorts				
Cohort Code	Cohort	In COM101	Cohort Size	Percentage
FR202010	Fall 2019	46	583	7.89%
FR202110	Fall 2020	48	512	9.38%
FR202120	Spring 2021	2	19	10.53%
FR202210	Fall 2021	47	497	9.46%
FR202220	Spring 2022	3	15	20.00%
FR202310	Fall 2022	61	605	10.08%
FR Total		207	2231	9.28%
Transfer Cohorts				
Cohort Code	Cohort	In COM101	Cohort Size	Percentage
TR202010	Fall 2019	12	181	6.63%
TR202110	Fall 2020	6	140	4.29%
TR202120	Spring 2021	0	38	0.00%
TR202210	Fall 2021	7	130	5.38%
TR202220	Spring 2022	1	30	3.33%
TR202310	Fall 2022	6	112	5.36%
TR Total		32	631	5.07%
Total		**239**	**2862**	**8.35%**

Jennifer deWinter noted that the proposed new objectives were specifically tied to the proposed changes in the Core Curriculum and without those changes would be invalid. She noted that they [Humanities] had given the entrance essays [for review] to a committee of experts in writing, and that the majority of them should not have been passing [e.g. allowing students to test out of COM 101]. She stated that they were moving forward and had upcoming meetings with the Provost and hoped to be getting back to us soon.

Mary Jorgenson Sullivan reminded everyone that with the impending HLC site visit in 2025, we will need to have completed a full assessment cycle, so there is a pressing need for some resolution to the learning objectives issue to allow the necessary assessments to proceed.

Joseph Orgel noted we must get the learning objectives that we need to have, and this in no way implies misappropriating learning objectives that are made for a particular curriculum.

Yuting Lin expressed the concern that the Biology Department believes that proposed changes are too challenging for the department to meet with their strong emphasis on laboratory courses.

Erin Hazard noted that at those learning objectives were part of a total proposal that would have eliminated the need for some of the credits that are currently required by the Core Curriculum, and that those original learning objectives were tied to the larger proposal which would cut down the

required credits in Com from 36 to 18 and recognize that a lot of current courses with C designations are not actually in a position to meet all of those learning objectives. So what they were advocating for in the proposal was fewer classes and more rigorous writing instruction.

Joseph Orgel noted that the comments of concern are well taken and are integrated and understood.

Mary Jorgenson Sullivan asked if there any way that we can move forward with the learning objective changes with the caveat that these are part of an ongoing revision of the core curriculum.

Jennifer deWinter replied that the existing C course program would not stand up to any external reviewer ever. A further issue is that Humanities 300 level classes would be 100 and 200 level courses at any other institution, so Humanities would fail [in an external review] because they are not meeting the typical learning objectives of a 300 level class. So the frustration that you're hearing is that they [Humanities] did some of this. They did a lot of this work last year. They saw that it was all broken, and were trying to show improvement before the next HLC.

Nick Menhart observed that Communications will take more time, but Humanities and Communications are not the same, but the whole process will take time. The Core Curriculum Assessment Committee will review Humanities in Fall 2024. We will not change curriculum now except for the 120 hour piece. We cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

As there was no further discussion it was moved by Kathiravan Krishnamurthy that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Eva Kultermann and with unanimous approval, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:32pm.

NOTE: Due to the miracle of modern technology, a text word-for-word transcript of the meeting as well as the Chat transcript are available. These can be provided upon request by the Secretary to Undergraduate Studies Committee Members *only*.