

ILLINOIS TECH UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday March 11, 2025

12:45pm

Online via Zoom and In-person in PS-152

(pdf version available [here](#))

Attending Voting Members: Fred Weening (AMAT), John Twombly (SSB), Kindon Mills (ARCH), Braja Mandal (CHEM), Erin Hazard (HUM), Yuting Lin (BIO), Patrick Ireland (SSCI), Matthew Bauer (CS), Nicole Legate (PSYC), Ishaan Goel (SGA), Erdal Oruklu (ECE), Stephen Kleps (CAEE), Murat Vural (MMAE), Victor Perez-Luna (CHBE), Keigo Kawaji (BME), Emily Leiner (PHYS), Jeremy Hajek (ITM),

Chairing Meeting: Kathir Krishnamurthy (FDSN)

Also Attending: Michael Pelsmajer (AMAT), Abby McGrath (Enrollment Services), Rich Klein (SSB), Kiah Ong (AMAT), Jeff Wereszczynski (UFC), Todd Springer (PHYS), Hannah Ringler (COMM), Keith Alexander (UGAA), Mary Haynes (UGAA), Nick Menhart (VP Assessment and Accreditation), Mary Jorgenson Sullivan (ELS), Pam Houser (INTM), Kevin Cassel (VP Acad Affairs), Kelly Roark (CLI), Katie Spink (Pre-Med), Gabrielle Smith (UGAA), Ayesha Qamer (Registrar), Brian Casario (ELS), Gabriel Martinez (Armour Academy), Kyle Hawkins (AMP), Katherine Quiroa (UGAA), Taylor Rojas (UGAA), Zipporah Robinson (Academic Success), Melanie Jones (Armour), Joe Gorzkowski (UGAA), Nichole Novak (Libraries), Melisa Lopez (Student Success & Retention), Chris Lee (Registrar), Diane Fifles (Univ Accreditation), Rama Sashank Madhurapantula (Dean Acad Discipline), Despina Stasi (AMAT), Norma I Scagnoli (VP Learning Initiatives)

Quorum was reached and the meeting was started at 12:47pm

1. Approval of Meeting minutes. Kathir Krishnamurthy displayed the [minutes of the February 25 UGSC meeting](#) and noted that these had been distributed previously. Matt Bauer moved that the minutes be accepted and this motion was seconded by Braja Mandal. The motion to accept the minutes was passed without opposition or abstention.
2. Approval of the proposed meeting agenda. Kathir displayed the [proposed agenda](#). A motion to approve the agenda was made by Kindon Mills and seconded by Matt Bauer. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.
3. The next item on the agenda was a proposal to reduce the number of credits for the [Bachelor of Information Technology](#). However, the discussion on this item was postponed as there was no one at the meeting to present the item.
4. The next item was a proposal to eliminate the [Bachelor of Science in Communication: Professional and Technical Communication](#) program. Erin Hazard gave the presentation. She explained that this program is a specialization in the Communications major. It is being replaced by a new program which will be offered starting in Fall 2025. There is currently 1 student in the program and this student has indicated that they will switch to the new program in the Fall. Fred Weening made a motion to approve the proposal and this was seconded by Matt Bauer. The motion passed without objection or abstention.

5. The next item was a proposal to eliminate the [minor in Information Architecture](#). Erin Hazard also presented this item. Erin explained that this minor has no students and there is no interest from students in taking this minor. Matt Bauer moved to accept the proposal and this motion was seconded by Fred Weening. The motion passed without objection or abstention.
6. The next item was a [report from the N-subcommittee](#) regarding what courses are to be given the (N) designation in the bulletin (there are several courses which have (N) designation but this is not listed in the bulletin). Braja Mandal made the presentation. He indicated that the committee consisted of himself (from Chemistry), Oscar Juarez (from Biology), and Todd Springer (from Physics). They reviewed the lower level offerings from the Chemistry, Biology, and Physics departments and identified 4 courses from Chemistry, and 6 courses each from Biology and Physics that met the (N) Learning Outcomes. Some of these courses already had the (N)-designation in the bulletin, but many did not.

Katie Spink asked whether they considered courses in the Food Sciences. She noted that although Food Science no longer offers a Bachelors program, they do still offer undergraduate courses and currently do have an offering with the (N) designation. Braja indicated that when they contacted Food Science they were told not to make any changes to their (N) offerings. Todd Springer clarified the situation by indicating that this proposal only adds to the (N) offerings, it is not an exhaustive list of the (N) courses.

Nick Menhart reminded everyone that due to recommendations from the Core Curriculum Assessment Committee, Learning Outcome #3 for (N) courses was changed to require pedagogy on the relevance of science to society. This Learning Outcome is also a requirement for the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Instructors of these courses need to be reminded that they need to meet this LO.

Since these courses have been approved for the (N) designation by the (N) subcommittee, this is an informational item. However, for record keeping purposes, Kathir asked for a motion to accept the report. Kevin Cassel pointed out that since the report comes from a subcommittee of UGSC there is no need for a motion and second, a vote can be taken directly: The vote was unanimous to accept the (N) subcommittee report and approve the (N) designation for the courses recommended in the report.

7. The next item was [a report from the \(C\) designation subcommittee](#). Hannah Ringler made the presentation of the report. She indicated that the Social Sciences department wanted to add a (C) designation to the course SSCI 106 (Introduction to Public Policy). The subcommittee reviewed the course syllabus and determined that the course meets the Learning Outcomes for (C). Kathir asked if there was any objection to accepting the report and its recommendation; there was none.
8. The next item was a request for a discussion on an apparent inconsistency in how students are able to get placed into / meet the prerequisites for Math 151 (Calculus 1). Michael Pelsmajer made the presentation. Michael indicated that when students enter Illinois Tech they are given a math placement test using the ALEKS software, which is a mathematics placement tool used at many schools. ALEKS is an adaptive tool that probes students' understanding and identifies their areas of weakness. ALEKS also comes with a tutoring system that students can use prior to taking the placement test. In fact the system allows students up to five attempts to pass the placement exam (each attempt will use different questions). Based on the results students are either placed in Math 151 or in one of two remedial courses: MATH 147 (College Algebra) or

MATH 148 (Precalculus). Passing MATH 147 with a grade of “C” or better allows a student to enroll in MATH 148. A grade of “C” or better in MATH 148 allows a student to take MATH 151.

The purpose of today’s discussion is to get input on what to do if a student gets placed in MATH 148, takes MATH 148 but doesn’t get a “C” or better, and then re-takes the placement exam (since they are allowed a total of five attempts on the placement exam) and gets a score which would place them in MATH 151. What the bulletin currently says is that the prerequisite for MATH 151 is either getting a “C” or better in MATH 148 or getting a score on the math placement test placing them in MATH 151. So, following this, a student in the previously described situation (which is rare) does meet the prerequisite of MATH 151. Academic Affairs has raised an issue with this as it doesn’t look proper for a student to fail a prerequisite course and yet be allowed to take the higher level class. Further mudding that situation is that elsewhere in the bulletin it indicates that a student who doesn’t place into MATH 151 can subsequently override the placement exam by AP credit or transfer credit (however it does not say by retaking and scoring high enough on the math placement test).

Mary Jorgenson Sullivan presented some data from the recent Core Curriculum Assessment of Math that may be relevant. The data showed that there was a high percentage (30-40%) of MATH 151 students that didn’t achieve the Math Learning Outcomes. Nick Menhart did a deeper analysis tracking students’ grades in MATH 151 (for one particular semester) with their highest grade in MATH 148 (given that they took MATH 148). The data showed that none of the students who had previously taken MATH 148 got an A in MATH 151. Of the students who got at best a “C” in MATH 148, none got a “B” in MATH 151, only 14% got a “C” in MATH 151, 27% got a “D” in MATH 151, and 59% failed MATH 151. Nick suggested that perhaps it would be better if the prerequisite for MATH 151 listed a grade of “B” or better (instead of “C” or better) in MATH 148.

Matt Bauer asked whether the 5 allowed attempts of ALEKS counts the initial assessment or not. Kia Ong responded that yes the initial assessment does count as one of the attempts (4 more after that). Matt indicated that he was in favor of allowing students who take MATH 148 to retake the placement exam and get into MATH 151 by doing so. He said that if this is the policy then the language in the bulletin should be changed to make it clear.

Todd Springer asked Nick whether he had analyzed data to see how well a student’s score on the placement test predicts success in MATH 151. Nick said they hadn’t done this, but that they do have access to the data for this. Rama Sashank Madhurapantula said that he has done some analysis of the data to come up with the cut-off scores for the placement exam (80% or higher places into MATH 151, 60-80% places into MATH 148, under 60% into MATH 147)

Joe Gorzkowski said that another concern that academic affairs has about letting a student who received a “D” or “E” in MATH 148 get into MATH 151 by retaking the placement test is the effect on their GPA. Their “D” or “E” grade counts toward their GPA while if they use a course retake they can replace this low grade with a higher grade.

Kevin Cassel suggested that it might be a good idea to tie a student’s grade in MATH 148 to their score on a retake of the placement test. He also indicated that he is all for giving students multiple pathways to success, but at this stage in a student’s academic career they are not always in the best position to determine what is best for themselves. The effect on the GPA that Joe mentioned is a significant problem that students might not think about when they hear that there is a way to get into MATH 151 without performing well in MATH 148. If a student is planning

on taking this path to MATH 151, they would be much better off withdrawing from MATH 148 if they are headed toward a “D” or an “E”, but students don’t always realize this or keep track of the withdrawal deadline.

Nick Menhart added that one danger of allowing weak students to get into MATH 151 by retaking the placement exam is that students might cram for the placement exam, pass it, but not retain the skills. He also wondered if there might be some way to exclude a student’s MATH 148 grade in their GPA calculation if they subsequently get into MATH 151 by retaking the placement exam. Mary Jorgenson Sullivan added that in her experience with ELS students, she has seen students go to great lengths to pass standardized language proficiency tests by taking the exams multiple times. These students often run into trouble when they are interviewing or need to work on group projects.

Kiah Ong mentioned that it is quite rare for a student who gets a “D” or “E” in MATH 148 to subsequently pass the placement test (there was only 1 such student in the 43 students contained in the data Nick showed).

Kathir indicated that there are other agenda items to get to and requested that the Math department use this feedback and come back to a later UGSC meeting with a proposal.

9. The next agenda was a [proposal to change the Astrophysics minor](#). Emily Leiner made the presentation. Emily explained that although there are a few students who complete this minor it is challenging because of the infrequency in the offering of some of the required courses. A student will need to start taking courses for the minor in the spring of their sophomore year if they want to get the minor by the end of their fourth year. The proposal is to give students a little more flexibility in how to meet the requirements of the minor. The two required courses in the minor stay the same, but rather than choosing three courses from a list of four, students would choose two from a list of three and then take any 300+ Physics course.

Matt Bauer moved that we accept the proposed changes, this motion was seconded by Kindon Mills. The motion passed without objection or abstention.

Due to time considerations, the agenda item on the policy on minors, and the ITM agenda item skipped earlier in this meeting would need to be presented at a future UGSC meeting. Fred Weening moved that the meeting be adjourned. This was seconded by Emily Leiner and the motion passed without objection.

The meeting adjourned at 1:47 pm.