

ILLINOIS TECH UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday May 5, 2026
12:45pm
Online via Zoom
(pdf version available [here](#))

Attending Voting Members: Kindon Mills (ARCH), Promila Dhar (BME), Erdal Oruklu (ECE), Erin Hazard (HASS), Fred Weening (AMAT), John Twombly (SSB), Jeremy Hajek (ITM), Nicole Legate (PSYC), Emily Leiner (PHYS), Murat Vural (MMAE), Matthew Bauer (CS), Andy Howard (BIOL), Stephen Kleps (CAEE)

Chairing Meeting: Fred Weening

(Note: UGSC Chair Kathir Krishnamurthy arrived a few minutes late, but let Fred continue to run the meeting since his internet connection was a bit unstable as he was attending a conference at the time of the meeting).

Also Attending: Taylor Rojas (UGAA), Todd Diel (FDSN), Katherine Quiroa (UGAA), Xiaofan Li (COC), Melisa Lopez (Student Success & Retention), Kiah Ong (AMAT), Jennifer deWinter (Dean LCS), Daniel Bliss (HASS), Cynthia Torres (Acad Affairs), Yasmin Rodriguez-Escutia (Armour Acad Advisor), Gabriel Martinez (Armour), Abby McGrath (Enrollment Services), Mary Jorgenson Sullivan (ELS), Jeff Wereszczynski (VP Acad Affairs), Joe Gorzkowski (UGAA), Maria Petersen (Academic Affairs), Gabrielle Smith (UGAA), Todd Spring (PHYS), Michael Arnaudo (Armour Acad Advisor), Carrie Hall (Armour), Kevin Cassel (VP Acad Transformation), Tracey McGee (ELS), Melanie Jones (Armour Acad Advisor), Nicole Novak (Libraries), Keith Alexander (UGAA), Ayesha Qamer (Registrar), Katie Spink (Pre-Med), Pavel Snopok (PHYS), Pam Houser (INTM), Rich Klein (Dean SSB), Brian Cassario (ELS), Kathy Nagle (ARCH), Kyle Hawkins (AMP)

A quorum was reached and the meeting started at 12:47 pm.

Fred Weening indicated that he would chair this meeting since UGSC chair Kathir Krishnamurthy was away at a conference and may only have limited internet access, and Vice-Chair Steve Kleps was not yet present..

1. Approval of the proposed meeting agenda. Fred Weening shared the [proposed agenda](#) which had been previously distributed. Fred moved to add an item of discussion of changes to the university's writing placement policy which had been announced through an email that went out yesterday to university advisors. The motion was to add a discussion item on this topic after item number 4 on the current agenda. Jeremy Hajek seconded the motion. Kindon Mills moved to accept the modified agenda, Jeremy Hajek

seconded the motion. The motion to accept the agenda as modified passed without objection or abstention.

2. Approval of Meeting minutes. The minutes for the UGSC meeting on [April 28, 2026](#) had previously been made available on the UGSC website. John Twombly moved to accept the minutes and this was seconded by Jeremy Hajek. The motion passed without objection or abstention.
3. The next item was an announcement of the result of the on-line voting on two proposals:
 - a. The [general policy on Reduced Credit Bachelor's Programs](#)
 - b. The [specific proposal of a Reduced Credit Bachelor's program in the Health Sciences](#).

Fred indicated that both of these proposals had been approved by a vote of 10 in favor with none opposed and no abstentions. He noted that 10 votes of approval just met the lower threshold of the criteria established in the standard operating procedures of UGSC which stipulates that a vote in favor by more than 50% of the eligible voting members is required. There are 18 eligible voting members of UGSC.

4. The next agenda item was on a proposal of a [reduced credit Bachelor's in Business Analytics](#). Rich Klein made the presentation.

Rich mentioned that Stuart School of Business currently offers a 120 credit BS in Business Analytics. In the reduced credit Bachelor's some of the content from the four year program has been removed and other content has been swapped out. Also the Business electives in the four year program are not present in the reduced credit program. This is very much a professionally focussed degree. There was some feedback since the proposal went out in email. One change from the feedback is to make the primary math course the 3 credit course Math 192 (Linear Mathematics) as opposed to the originally proposed 4 credit course Math 148 (Preparation for Calculus). This change takes the total credits of the program down from 91 to 90.

Rich indicated that the program will be targeted to adult learners who may have taken some college courses, but that might not be conducive to transferring to a 4 year program. This program should appeal to people who are currently in the workforce who are looking to obtain a Bachelor's degree. The plan would be to put many, if not all, of the courses in the program up as on-line courses.

Matt Bauer had a question regarding the name of the degree program. Would the title of the program say reduced credit Bachelors? Rich replied that within the current market of degrees, none of the 90 credit programs include the phrasing "reduced credit" in the title. The current proposal is to call the degree a Bachelor's of Business Analytics as opposed to a Bachelor of Science (or Arts) in Business Analytics

Jeremy Hajek asked how this degree program is positioned with respect to Coursera offerings? Rich responded that he doesn't expect that this will be part of the university's Coursera offerings. He indicated that he thinks the popularity of this program will grow faster than a 120 credit BS in Business Analytics program. There is likely to be a large market of non-traditional students who are not looking for the college campus experience. This program will also likely be popular with veterans looking to get an on-line degree.

There was a short discussion on the requirements that all of the reduced credit Bachelor's programs at Illinois Tech have regarding students completing at least 45 of the credits at Illinois Tech. Katie Spink pointed out that this requirement is listed in the general proposal for the Reduced credit Bachelor's programs that was just passed by electronic vote.

Fred Weening asked if someone knew of all of the future steps this proposal will have to go through before the program could be offered to students. Rich indicated that it will need to go through all the approval steps at Illinois Tech up to and including Board of Trustee approval before it can be submitted to HLC to get accreditor approval. Jeff Werczszynski added that the HLC approval is likely to take at least 6 months. So the earliest the program might be offered realistically is in Fall 2027. He also mentioned that the university can't begin to market the program until it has gotten HLC approval, so with all these delays it is important that we get this approved at UGSC quickly.

Since this proposal is for a new program it is classified as a major change, and as such cannot be voted on at this meeting. A vote by email will be sent out after this meeting with a short deadline for submission of votes. This short deadline is so that the vote results will be known prior to the last UFC meeting of the semester on Friday.

5. The next item was the one added to the agenda concerning the changes to the writing placement policy that had been sent out in [an email](#) to academic advisors yesterday. Jennifer deWinter asked that the email be shared on the screen and she described the contents of the message and the reasoning behind some of the changes that are being made to the current placement practices.

She explained that currently we have a two-course writing sequence COM101 followed by (a course previously numbered) COM 200. These courses are prerequisites to many other (H) and (S) courses required in the Core curriculum. Historically about 60% of students placed out of COM 101 from either AP classes, SAT scores, or the COM placement test. However when experts came in to assess, very few students were placing out of the course. Performance of students who placed out of COM101 in subsequent (H) and (S) courses showed that they did not have the skills that were the learning objectives of COM101. The placement test was not assessing whether they had the skills described in the learning objectives of COM 101.

Another important consideration for the university is that of “yield activities”: If prospective students are given a schedule in the spring their likelihood of coming to the university is greatly increased. The current practice is to administer a writing placement test during the summer, but waiting on placing them into a writing class until after this placement test is too late with respect to the aforementioned yield activities.

The email to advisors is written as a list of FAQs to help advisors explain the new placement procedures. Incoming students will now, by default, be placed in COM 101 in the spring. Students can subsequently be placed out of COM 101 by showing AP or transfer credit, or if they have sufficiently high ACT or SAT scores (the same criteria that is currently listed in the bulletin). Students can also submit a portfolio of writing (specific requirements are given in the email linked above) by July 15th which will be evaluated by August 1st. This portfolio review replaces the current writing placement test.

Mary Jorgenson-Sullivan had a few comments/questions with respect to these changes that she wanted to bring to the discussion:

1. We have a two-semester pilot program in process currently that was approved by UGSC on December 9, 2025. How is this change in placement going to affect the pilot program?
2. There is an issue of transparency, and on the timing of announcing these changes. During this semester there have already been some significant changes (eg.the course renumbering) that many faculty and students have felt blindsided by. The timing of announcing this current change does not seem to be good. .
3. We have just had a mock site-review in preparation for the HLC site-review happening next semester. One of the comments from the reviewers was that it is very important that the practices that are being followed are in alignment with the information in the university’s website and catalog. If you look in the bulletin, it states that there is a writing proficiency test. So modifications to that would need to be rolled out in a different way so that the bulletin is accurate and up-to-date.

Jennifer responded that she feels we are still firmly in line with what the bulletin states. The bulletin states that there is a writing proficiency test; the test now is a portfolio review. This is a method of placement which has been identified by experts in the field as being a best practice.

Mary questioned whether the changes to the writing placement policy were being made based on benchmarking with other institutions or on assessment data. Jennifer said the changes were based on assessment data that the HASS department has been collecting internally. Pulling essays from the HUM 200 classes has shown that students do not have the skills that they should have acquired by taking COM101. This has caused faculty in later (H) courses to have to teach these skills which has prevented them from teaching some of the material in the curriculum of their own courses. Mary asked if

Jennifer could share that data with her, and Jennifer indicated that this was not a problem.

Kindon Mills expressed concern that the new policy would essentially add 3 more credits of Core course requirements to lots of student's curricula. She indicated that students in Architecture already have a very packed curriculum and this will only make that harder to complete. She wondered if there was a possibility of counting the COM101 class as meeting the lower level (H) requirement.

Jennifer indicated that this isn't a change to the Core Curriculum, but she understood Kindon's concern. She indicated that if the UGSC wanted to propose at a later time that COM101 count as an (H) course, she as Dean and an expert in the field would not be opposed to that.

Abby McGrath had some questions/comments about implementation of the changes. She mentioned that for a variety of reasons the university does not pre-enroll students in classes. Secondly, she is a little confused over statements saying that students will be enrolled in COM101 in the spring for the yield activity, but then also saying that students don't have to take COM101 in their first semester. She was also wondering what the mechanism was going to be to collect and grade student portfolios.

Jennifer mentioned that her office is working closely with Malik on these issues. When a student gets accepted at Illinois Tech, our professional advisors are reaching out to the student and helping them get enrolled for the Fall semester. If a student wants to submit a portfolio to try to place out of COM101 there is a dedicated email address that they can send their portfolio materials to. There will be a trained team that will assess those materials. If the student does place out of COM 101, they can drop that course and transfer into another course at that time.

Abby asked Jennifer if her academic advisors are going to be reaching out to all incoming students regardless of what academic discipline the student is in. Jennifer indicated that they are doing this with students in their college and are trying to get the information out so that other colleges can do this with their students.

Andy Howard had some concerns with some of the details (or missing details) of what was indicated in the email regarding what students need to submit for their portfolio. Jennifer indicated that the email was meant to be an overview and what will get sent to students will be more detailed. Andy: will this be implemented starting in the summer of 2026? Jennifer: Yes. Andy: Was this a decision reached by your committee? Jennifer: This was a decision reached by me, Malik, Brian, and Sharone. She also indicated that this was a decision that had its origins three years ago when Hannah Ringler was here at Illinois Tech. Hannah's study of the situation indicated that the placement exam was completely failing its purpose. She was advocating for a completely different placement process that was a somewhat radical change. The current change is to keep the basic

structure, but to change the particular means of assessment; and in conjunction to place students in COM101 by default in the spring.

Fred Weening asked Jennifer whether she was seeking UGSC approval of this change of policy. Jennifer said no, we are not changing the process; we are piloting the assessment criteria. Fred indicated that these changes had not been directly communicated to UGSC and asked Jennifer if she had been planning on informing UGSC of these changes. Jennifer indicated that yes, she and Jeff were going to reach out, but they didn't know when to do this because the last regularly scheduled meeting of UGSC had already been past. They started the process by reaching out to advisors – those who were most integral to the whole process.

Andy mentioned that as a student advisor himself, this has taken him by surprise. Jennifer said that her thought process was to start with the professional advisors since they deal almost exclusively with first and second year students.

John Twombly indicated that he is not a professional advisor, but he is a faculty member who does advise in-coming first year students. He wanted to know what he should be telling students: Should he advise all students into COM101 unless they have AP credit, or SAT or ACT scores or this portfolio that places them out of COM 101? Jennifer: Yes, John: if they do have one of those exceptions, then what is the course for them? Jennifer: HUM 180. John: What is COM 200, does that also satisfy the requirements? Jennifer: COM 200 is currently the pilot of a different thing, it can satisfy the requirements, but by-in-large you should be sending the students to HUM 180.

John commented that he was blindsided by this, as he was blindsided by the change in the course numbers. He said it makes him look bad to the students. The problem is that people above him are doing things at the last moment.

Matt Bauer commented that if Malik wants to move forward with actually pre-registering students for a course, then that course should be their ITP course. The ITP course is something that all first year students should take in their major in their first year.

Katie Spink asked Jennifer if she could address how this change would interact with the core pilot that is underway. Are we counting COM101 as part of this pilot to count for lower level humanities? There was some confusion due to the course renumbering, but ultimately Jennifer stated that as long as the content of COM 101 is the same as the course mentioned in the pilot, then the data from COM101 can be used in the pilot study.

Mary Jorgenson-Sullivan had a few follow up comments.

1. This change is going to be problematic with respect to the HLC site visit
2. The assessment of the portfolio in the email indicates that the writing samples must include thesis driven arguments. This is not stated anywhere in the learning objectives that were approved for (C)

3. For our current (C) designation courses in the pilot, the HUM 200 course was inaccurately numbered and there were seniors in the course. This is going to skew the assessment data.
4. The ad hoc decisions that are being made make it extraordinarily difficult to conduct assessments.

Jennifer responded that the changes to the writing placement don't affect the core at all. Also they are not related to the communications pilot program that was passed in December. All these changes do is to assume during the spring enrollment that incoming students are placed in COM101 and to give an assessment mechanism by which the student can get placed out of COM101. This was not an ad hoc decision, but was based on multiple conversations and on a deep look into research on effective placement procedures.

Kiah Ong asked for some clarification when advising a student who comes in with some transfer credit. He asked if it is correct that if a student comes in with credit for a lower level humanities course, that the student will not need to take COM101? Jennifer responded that most universities, including IAI, will require a two semester writing sequence. So odds are that if a student is transferring in, they will get credit for COM101 and HUM180.

Kiah expressed that he felt much more understanding of the changes after the discussion today. But wanted to point out that he, along with many others were taken by complete surprise when the email was circulated announcing these changes. The fact that this announcement came up after the last regularly scheduled UGSC meeting for the semester had been held makes it appear that there was intention to by-pass the discussion.

Jennifer indicated that this was not the intention. She said that she struggles to find the right order in which to communicate changes in policy. She also indicated that she had been in discussion with Jeff Werezczynski about producing more materials for advising over the summer.

Andy Howard moved to adjourn the meeting and this was seconded by Steve Kleps
There were no objections or abstentions.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:51pm