Responses to the UF Faculty Senate's Committee on Committees' Questions Concerning the University Curriculum Committee (UCC)

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1. How well is your committee functioning?

Since I took on the role of UCC Chair in 2015, our Undergraduate Affairs team has focused on two primary aspects of the committee's operation: Efficiency and Relationship-Building. Prior to this time, the management and review of requests often projected onto committee members and to faculty submitters an adversarial approach to the curriculum process. The perception of many faculty submitters was that the UCC was against them, and the faculty submitter needed to prove the worth of their request with very little support leading up to the monthly meetings. As a member of the committee prior to 2015, I often experienced the UCC meetings as modeling a dissertation defense, but, in this case, the committee members were not always the experts in the discipline area of the requests. When I started this new role in 2015, I was determined to shift the mindset of the committee to one of a balance between being keepers and communicators of the curriculum standards of this university and serving as an advocate for faculty, thus achieving the mission of both the faculty and the committee.

Below is a summary of each area of focus and commentary on status of operation and need for continued improvement.
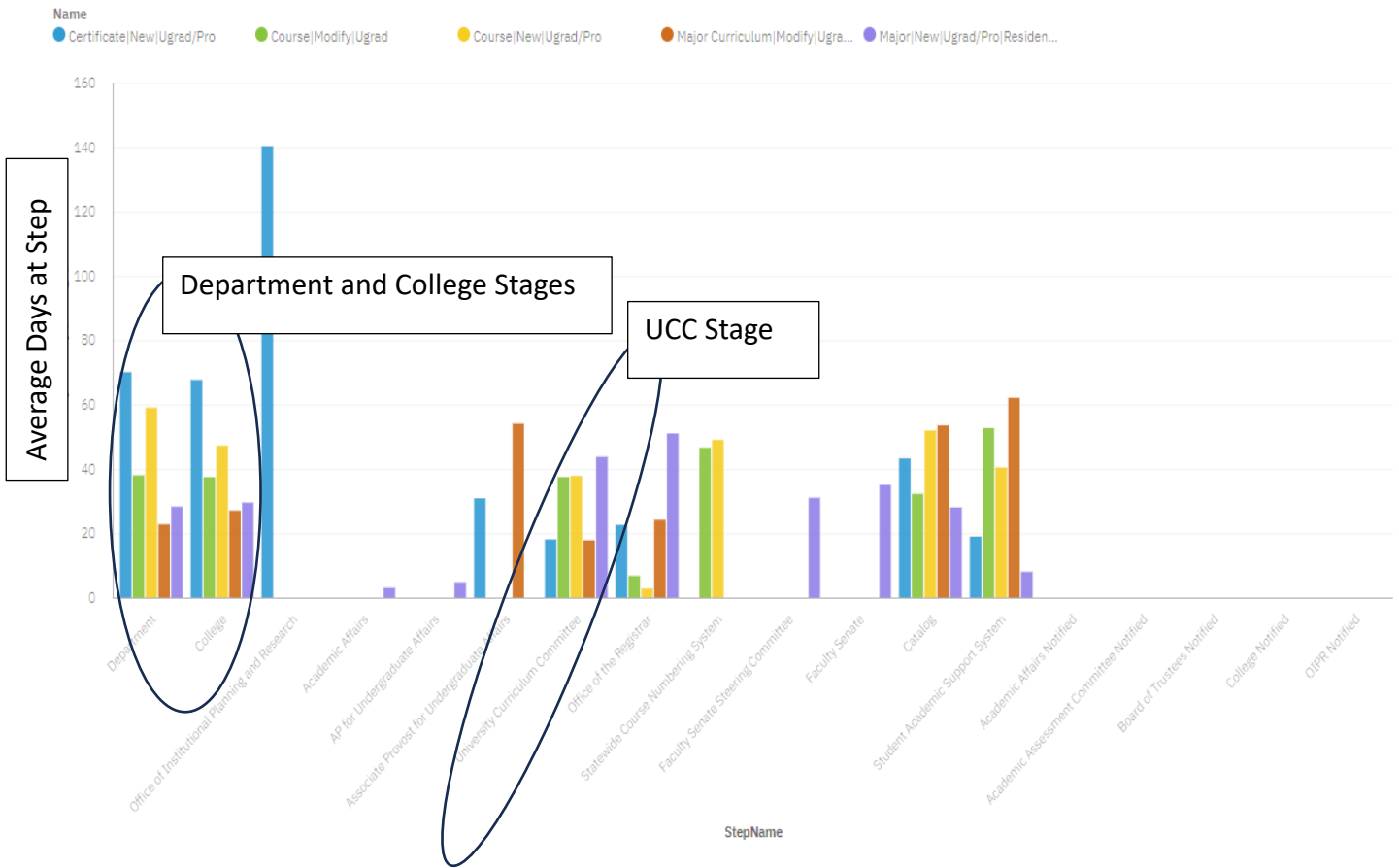
Efficiency (Time to Complete Each Step)
The OUA team (Casey Griffith, Angela Lindner with assistance as needed from Toby Shorey and Corrin Fleming) strive to proactively manage incoming requests to break down myths of "UCC bureaucracy and barriers."

In the 2022-2023 Academic Year, the UCC evaluated a total of 477 requests, comprised of 336 new or modify existing course requests, 133 program requests, and 8 administrative requests. Each request is instigated by a department or program and proceeds to various levels of evaluation and approval, including college approval, UCC approval, and, in some cases for program requests that involve multiple disciplines and/or are eventually shuttled to the Florida Board of Governors, Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees for approval.

Once a request reaches the "Office of Undergraduate Affairs" and "UCC" stages in the approval flow, a series of actions performed by the Undergraduate Affairs team proceeds. The "Office of Undergraduate Affairs" stage involves a rapid evaluation process to ensure that the item is ready for UCC review. If not, Casey Griffith contacts the faculty submitter to provide assistance in preparing the item for UCC evaluation. Once at the UCC stage, the item is "bunched" with other requests that were submitted before the deadline for the next UCC meeting (which is always the Friday after the previous month's meeting date). Approximately two weeks prior to the meeting date, the Review Subcommittee meets after having had the opportunity to review each item on the agenda. The Subcommittee members discuss each item, come to consensus on gaps in the requests, prepare comments for the faculty submitter, and provide a recommendation of Approve, Conditionally Approve, Recycle, Table, or Deny. These comments and early recommendation are sent to the faculty submitter with ample time for their response, and the Chair and Casey Griffith reconsider the initial recommendation in response to the degree that the faculty submitter has addressed the concerns of the reviewers. These revised recommendations are sent out to the UCC members prior to each meeting so that they are aware of the extensive review and response that has already occurred on every agenda item. This process of pre-review prior to each meeting allows meeting discussion to be devoted to substantive lingering concerns, and affords the meetings to be more efficient, effective, and, as discussed below, collegial. After each meeting, Casey Griffith follows up with each faculty submitter to complete any remaining actions and, ultimately, to forward the items to the next stage of approval.

A recent analysis of the past five years of UCC operation in terms of time in which a request "sits" at each approval stage revealed that the small UCC operations team in Undergraduate Affairs is very efficient in moving items forward. For example, as the bar chart shows below, the average time a request for a new certificate sits in the department before forwarding to the college was on average 70 days, and the colleges held onto the request for an average of 68 days. Once these requests had been forwarded to the UCC approval stage, they "sat" for only an average of 28 days before moving forward to the Registrar. This trend of higher department and college wait times was repeated across all types of requests considered by the UCC.

Average Days at Step by Process Type (5 Years)

Name
● Certificate|New|Ugrad/Pro   ● Course|Modify|Ugrad   ● Course|New|Ugrad/Pro   ● Major Curriculum|Modify|Ugra...   ● Major|New|Ugrad/Pro|Residen...

While these early results are promising in terms of UCC's efficient operations, our team is continuing to evaluate the data and reflect on their meeting the expectations for their individual and collective roles to identify opportunities for improvement.

Relationship-Building (Partnerships with Faculty)
The overarching mentality of the UCC has shifted from adversarial to advocacy and education.

As indicated above, the UCC operations team holds relationship at a premium, with the committee members and department and college partners. Starting with Casey Griffith's role as liaison for faculty to the UCC process, each step of the UCC operation nurtures a collaborative, collegial mentality. Holding service to the departments and colleges at a premium, the Undergraduate Affairs team makes all attempts to respond quickly to email inquiries and to develop partnerships with the college representatives on the committee, the college and department curriculum coordinators, and with the faculty submitters. Since 2015, my observation is that the

meetings and process are far less dreaded and considered arduous compared to prior to 2015. However, the Undergraduate Affairs team can stand to continue improvement in this area, as noted below.

In evaluation of the current state of the UCC approval process, the Undergraduate Affairs team has committed to follow through with the following actions in the upcoming year:
- Continue data analysis to pinpoint areas in the approval flow with most opportunity to expedite;
- Survey faculty to better understand their experience in the UCC approval process;
- Development of training modules for faculty;
- Activate an email list of undergraduate coordinators and communication strategy;
- Shape and implement a communication strategy to explain the "how" and the "why" of the curriculum approval process;
- Assume greater interdependence of the Undergraduate Affairs' staff roles, including scheduling meetings and notifying members prior to each academic year, finalizing the membership roster no later than August of each year, preparing the recommendations document and agenda and making each available to the Chair for review well in advance of each meeting, ensuring accuracy of the agenda items, preparing to run each monthly meeting, and preparing summaries for the Chair for Faculty Senate presentations.

One important point to make is that the primary reason the above steps have not already been achieved is because of the under-resourced staffing of the UCC (and all other curriculum committees at UF). Because of the "tyranny of deadlines" that all curriculum committees must honor in the September-May action period, summers are typically the time for "extra" work as the above. However, Undergraduate Affairs has seen in the past 7 years an uptick in state legislation and regulations that mandate our attention in the summer (e.g., civic literacy, general education core course syllabi, civil discourse, experiential learning, addition of public speaking in communications state core courses, and audit and approval of all general education courses). Advocacy by the Faculty Senate for increased staffing in the curriculum operations areas is requested.

2. **Is your committee membership size and make-up (i.e., administrative liaisons, faculty, etc.) appropriate?**

Yes, the size of the committee (12 Senate voting electees, 12 Provost voting appointees, 3 Student Government non-voting representatives, and various liaisons)

is a good size, allowing for diverse perspectives and ample partners to accomplish the mission of the UCC.

3. Are your meetings well-attended? Are administrative liaisons attending?

An analysis of attendance records for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 Academic Years provides an answer to this question. Below are the average percentage of members by category attending UCC meetings over those two academic years:

All Members	65%
Average Total Number per Meeting	15
Provost Appointees	38% of Total 81% of Provost Appointees
Senate Electees	27% of Total 53% of Senate Electees
Student SG Representatives	19% of SG Representatives Only
Liaisons	Average Number per Meeting: 7
(Registrar, Director of Assessment, etc.)	
Guests (Faculty Submitters, e.g.)	Average Number per Meeting: 11

Our UCC meetings as well-attended, and, in most cases, members not attending have participated in pre-review of items and/or have provided the courtesy of notifying our team of their absence in advance. We do suffer from participation by SG student representatives, a point that I make below in suggesting how to improve the UCC experience.

4. Are you experiencing any issues that should be brought up to Faculty Senate that would help your committee accomplish your charge(s) or mission?

Need to Emphasize Faculty Governance

One of the strongest means of exercising faculty authority in the educational process is through their participation in the curriculum review and approval process. When faculty fail to understand that their disengaging from this process exacerbates the external threat to faculty governance at the state and local levels, as manifest in legislation, regulations, and recent decisions, they are complicit in this current trend of lessening the oversight authority of faculty over standards and content of the curriculum provided to our students.

The Faculty Senate can play an influential role in emphasizing this truth to its faculty members. The Faculty Senate should articulate minimum expectations for

participation of its electees in all committee work, including curriculum committees. The Senate should also request feedback from its electees on their perceived role and effectiveness in those roles in serving the various committees. Also, the selection of Senate representatives should be better matched to their areas of expertise and disciplines. The UCC is best served in having members who are from colleges that offer undergraduate degrees and who have had experience in curriculum development at the department and/or college levels. Adding some questions that ferret out the background of nominees would be helpful in this regard.

Closer Monitoring of Proposed Legislation and Impacts

As mentioned previously, the state legislature and BOG have produced legislation and regulations that restrict our curriculum more than in previous decades. The amount of time required to monitor proposed legislation and provide our government relations staff impact analyses has increased dramatically in the past 7 years. <u>The Provost's Office has no dedicated staff to monitor impending legislation, prepare impact analyses, and develop collaborative responses for compliance with approved legislation and regulations.</u> To date, I have served in that capacity out of necessary. Furthermore, my observations are that the Faculty Senate has not dedicated committee or representative that serves in this capacity. I recommend that the Senate create a new legislation "watch" committee that serves the purpose of monitoring, communicating, and implementing legislation and regulations involving all aspects of the educational experience, including curriculum.

5. **Are you working on any major issues that you'd like to share with us today?**

An issue that we are attempting to prevent not becoming a major concern is a succession plan for leading the UCC in the near and long terms. My last day as Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs is January 4, 2024. I have proposed both a short- and long-term plan for managing the UCC and all curriculum committees managed by Undergraduate Affairs, as described to follow.

Succession Plan: Short Term

After January 4, our plan to continue the excellent service of our UCC, General Education Committee (GEC), and Professional Curriculum Committee (PCC) is to appoint a chair for each who is well-versed in the process of the committee work to which they are assigned. At the time of this writing, three candidates have been

identified to serve in these capacities, and we are finalizing the details of these temporary appointments, anticipated to last at least through the Spring 2024 semester, if not through the Fall 2024 semester. All three candidates currently are or recently have been Faculty Senate representatives and have maintained a sustained track record of service to these committees.s

Recommendation for Long-Term Operation

In the longer term, I am proposing a more unified structure that will manage all curriculum processes at UF: Undergraduate, Professional, Graduate, and General Education. In short, I propose that oversight of the UCC, GEC, and PCC (currently in Undergraduate Affairs) and Graduate Council/Curriculum Committee (currently in the Graduate School) be centralized. This curriculum monitoring and oversight structure would be a stand-alone arm and unit unifying all UF curriculum processes, including not only the approval process of these bodies, but also all activities related to any stage of the life cycle of curriculum, including academic policy, state legislation and regulation monitoring and reporting, assessment, and accreditation.

Separating the curriculum portion from Undergraduate Affairs' portfolio will afford the unit to focus on student academic support services, including tutoring, coaching, retention programming, etc., and continued expansion of the UF Quest curriculum and program.

6. **Do you work closely with any other chairs or committees to address any mutual topics or topic/issue overlaps?**

Yes, of course. First, because the General Education and Professional Curriculum Committees are administered through Undergraduate Affairs, the UCC is naturally connected to the work of these other committees. In many cases, these committees are cross-fertilized by the same members, which adds to continuity of the operation, standards, and best practices across these committees.

Additionally, Casey Griffith and I meet every other week with the Chair of the Graduate Council/Curriculum Committee, Tom Kelleher, and his supporting team to ensure a seamless operation across all levels of curriculum. We work closely with the UF Director of Assessment, Dr. Maria Leite, who chairs the Academic Assessment Committee.

My representation on the Academic Policy Council in its monthly meetings ensures a connection to the concerns and work of the curriculum committees my role oversees. Note as well that my leading the Advisory Council for Undergraduate Affairs monthly meetings ensures communication of UCC-related items across all colleges that offer undergraduate degrees.

7. Does your committee have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)? If so, where are they posted, and, if not, would it be useful to your committee to create and use them?

Yes, you can find all operating procedures for the UCC on the approval web site at https://approval.ufl.edu. We maintain this site regularly as need arises.

Additional Questions:

What can FS do to assist the work of our curriculum committees?
- Select nominees who are experienced in the work of curriculum and are from relevant colleges.
- Articulate to the greater Faculty Senate body the importance of service on curriculum committees as an important means of exercising faculty governance.
- Impress on Senate members the responsibilities of committee members, including the following:
  - Service on a subcommittee necessitating contributions outside of the actual committee meetings;
  - Prepare for all committee meetings by reviewing the agenda items and, if possible, submitting questions and concerns to the Chair in advance of the meetings;
  - If representing a college (associate dean), prepare to present program-level requests and any course request with a Conditional Approve, Recycle, or Table recommendation. Also, ensure that the faculty submitting these requests are present in the meeting.
  - Serve as a mentor/advisor for faculty in the college/program they are representing in their preparation of items for submission and their response to comments elicited from the review process;
  - Partner with the Undergraduate Affairs staff who ensure the requests are moved forward in the approval system; and
  - With experience, mentor less-experienced committee members.
- Here is an estimate of the ideal time faculty should spend on UCC work:

- Members of committee: **5 hours per month** – 2 hours for the meeting itself, and 2 hours to read through items upon which they will be voting, and 1 hour to email/meet with college reps to summarize key decisions made at the committee.
- Serving on review subcommittee: **5 additional hours per month** – 4 hours to review documents for review subcommittee meeting and 1 hour for the subcommittee meeting itself.
- Co-Chair Commitment: **3 additional hours per month** – 1 hour extra review, 1 hour meeting prior to UCC meeting with committee chair and Associate Director, 1 hour for interactions with faculty senate.
- Ad-Hoc Subcommittees: **2-3 additional hours per month** depending upon the charge.
- Assist the UCC in more effective selection of student representatives. As specified by the Constitution, 3 SG students are assigned to serve on the UCC. The problems with this process are the following: 1) we rarely receive the student names until September-October each year, well after the UCC has commenced operations; 2) because of this timing, we rarely have the ability to fully train the students and provide expectations of their participation; and 3) rarely do we receive students who engage, as the attendance data show. Perhaps a better way to determine student representatives is to maintain 3 total, but have 1 represent SG, 1 represent the Student Advisory Council for Undergraduate Affairs, and 1 represent a student at-large who is nominated by their department or college and selected by the UCC members.