

Committee on Courses of Instruction Annual Report 2017 -18

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on Courses of Instruction (CCI) meets bi-weekly to review campus and systemwide policies, all matters relating to courses of instruction (including review of new courses and revisions to courses), consultation with other committees and administrative units, as well as the consideration of graduate student instructors, student petitions and grievances.

In addition to the routine business of CCI, the committee gave attention to some matters of policy as they related to course approvals. CCI consulted with Preceptor Ethan Hutchinson, Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning (CITL) Director Jody Greene, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA) Herbie Lee, and Director for Online Education Initiatives Michael Tassio for their views on advising, pedagogy and course assessment, and online courses. CCI also developed a new set of petition submission guidelines for preceptors, worked on streamlining the course approval form in preparation for a shift to the smart catalog, and partnered with CEP to develop a survey of UCSC grading practices.

Other major topics are discussed below.

Online Courses

CCI collaborated with the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) to develop a proposal for an online course policy for the UCSC campus. CCI focused on revising the online course approval questions to reduce redundancy and generally make the process less onerous, while still gathering information distinct to online courses both for administrative reasons and to improve our understanding of the fundamentals of a successful online offering. The online course proposal will be presented to the Senate in the academic year 2018-2019.

Enrollment Restrictions

CCI discussed the issue of catalog copy that specifies enrollment restrictions. Generally, CCI is not in favor of departments imposing too many restrictions on enrollments, but CCI recognizes three grounds on which enrollment restrictions might be appropriate:

- First, there may be pedagogical issues, such as the need for discussion in a seminar course that would make it wise to limit the number of students in every offering of the course, which should be reflected in the catalog.
- Second, there may be capacity limits, such as the number of stations in a laboratory, which limits the number of students per section, but not the number of sections. There may also be constraints on instructor or TA availability. These limits should not be in the catalog nor on the forms submitted to CCI, as they are properly addressed in the curriculum leave plans and course scheduling each quarter.
- Third, impaction of a major may require limiting a course to majors, in order to ensure sufficient capacity for the majors. Limiting to majors may also be appropriate for capstone courses for the major.

In any request for restrictions on enrollment, strong justifications for the restriction should be provided, as the default view of CCI is that all students who satisfy the prerequisites should be permitted to enroll in a course. Exclusion of curious and competent students from courses is not consistent with the educational aspirations of UCSC.

Stakeholder Issues

Many course revisions were submitted with no consideration of stakeholder issues—specifically the departments for the requested prerequisites and the courses and programs that require the course as a prerequisite or as part of a major or minor. Although it is fairly straightforward for a faculty member or department to request stakeholder approval for the listed prerequisites of a course, it is very difficult to find out what programs or courses require a particular course. The Senate and Registrar should work together to create a database of course and program dependencies and provide easy access to the database for every faculty member.

UCOP/Senate Review Requests

All Academic Senate Committees were asked to comment on the Strategic Academic Planning (SAP) process and the 28 Themed Academic Working Group (TAWG) documents submitted for consideration for academic priority. CCI believes that the SAP process is proceeding too quickly for thoughtful and meaningful Senate input and that the timeline to provide our opinions has been too short. Given this, CCI members divided up the 28 TAWG proposals and consistent with our committee charter, evaluated them based on their contribution to the undergraduate educational mission of the University. At least one committee member read each proposal.

We found that many of the proposals gave only lip service to undergraduate education, reflecting the administration's framing of the SAP to the faculty primarily in terms of research areas, rather than as a comprehensive *academic* plan. A more deliberative process with better framing of the goals would likely have resulted in a rather different set of proposals, which could be more fairly assessed for their effects on education at UCSC.

Procedural Changes or Adjustments

Currently, after CCI approves a course, it becomes a permanent addition to the catalog (though CCI can ask that it be removed if not taught for six years). Many courses have evolved considerably since their original approval and bear little resemblance to the originally approved course. It has been proposed within CCI that all course approvals be of limited duration, such as 10 years, with course-offering units required to submit a new syllabus for re-approval a year before approval expiration. Courses recently approved by CCI could have their expiration dates set 10 years from their most recent approval, and older courses could have sunset dates spread out arbitrarily over the next 10 years to avoid a large bolus of expirations in any one year.

At present, faculty should submit their current syllabi any time they make a major change, so that the course approval database has up-to-date course information.

UCSC Study Abroad with the Committee on International Education (CIE)

CCI and CIE chairs and analysts met in the winter quarter of 2018 to determine the process for evaluating and approving UC Abroad courses, and reported the results to the Study Abroad office and the VPDUE. Study Abroad will accept UC Abroad proposals and forward them to CIE

for review. CIE will return the proposals to Study Abroad, which will then forward the recommended proposals to CCI along with CIE comments. CCI will review UC Abroad courses in a timely manner to facilitate concretization of relations with overseas institutions.

Credit Inflation

Thirty years ago, faculty were instructed that courses at UCSC were semester courses compressed into a quarter. UCSC is the only UC campus to have a default 5-unit course, which is supposed to require 150 hours of student work—equivalent to 3.3 semester credits. Most of the other UC campuses use 3-unit and 4-unit courses, corresponding to 90 or 120 hours of student work. Faculty who have come to UCSC from quarter-system universities have generally created courses of this size, but have given the default 5 units to them. The default 5-unit course has caused difficulty with transferring courses from other colleges, as the transferred courses often do not carry as many units as the UCSC courses, even when they have the same content. The small number of high-unit courses taken by students also makes it difficult to structure 4-year curricula in fields where there are many different subjects to cover, such as engineering fields and interdisciplinary studies.

It has been proposed within CCI that the university move from the 5-unit default course to a 4-unit default course, asking departments to review the amount of time students actually spend on each course and adjusting credits appropriately for existing courses. Nevertheless, it is also recognized by CCI that one problem with this recommendation is that reducing the number of credits per course to the level justified by the course content will almost undoubtedly require increasing the number of course offerings each quarter, and the campus already is challenged to find sufficient classroom seats to handle the current number of courses.

Courses Descriptions and Learning Outcomes

All course approvals now require that syllabi have specific course descriptions and learning outcomes. CCI would like to urge that this information be made much more accessible. This could mean setting up much wider access to the approved course descriptions in the online course approval database, or asking each department to provide easy access to their detailed course descriptions.

CCI has noted that currently many of the course syllabi being submitted have very vague learning outcomes, which ought to outline specific skills so that students and faculty know what a course is supposed to help the students develop. This can be of benefit in grounding expectations for subsequent courses as well.

Routine Business

- The committee considered 161 course approvals in the fall, 282 in the winter, and 155 in the spring, for a total of 598. Within the course approvals were 166 requests for a GE designation. Of these 8 were denied, and the rest were granted initially or after discussion.
- The committee considered 108 requests for Graduate Student teaching designation and 3 for undergraduate instructors.
- The committee received 371 petitions; 55 were denied. The majority were grade appeals or requests for GE substitutions. There were also a number of petitions from

undergraduates who required a letter grade as a major requirement when enrolling in a graduate course, which defaults to the P/NP option. CCI hopes there can be a better process developed so that undergraduates taking graduate courses can rely on a default of receiving a grade as they can with their other courses.

- The committee received 8 grade grievances. 6 were denied, and the rest were granted initially or after investigation and further discussion.

Recommendations for 2018-2019 Committee

- Update the course approval calendar to align with the committee business schedule and course enrollment schedules.
- Continue to monitor and communicate findings regarding online courses, course enrollment, grading practices, stakeholder statements, UC Abroad, SmartCatalog, and other issues linked to course approvals, petitions, grievances, and other matters in the committee's charge.

CCI greatly benefited from the expertise of Associate Registrar Margie Claxton. CCI also benefited tremendously from the expert assistance and dedication of Susanna Wrangell.

Respectfully submitted;

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