

DATE: May 20, 2021

TO: John Zomchick, Provost

FROM: Curriculum Review Taskforce
Co-Chairs R.J. Hinde and Dixie Thompson

RE: Recommendations regarding modifications to the curricular review process

As charged, the Curriculum Review Taskforce (see *Appendix A* for membership) has completed its work and is bringing forward recommendations. These recommendations have been formulated after a review of curricular change processes at several institutions (including Clemson University, Indiana University, Michigan State University, North Carolina State University, the University of Florida, the University of Georgia, the University of Kentucky, the University of Wisconsin, and Virginia Tech) and after fact-finding interviews with faculty and administrators at some of these institutions. There are three aspects of our work: (1) considerations for a process for determining the impact of proposals; (2) thoughts about the type of information sharing and feedback to help create a culture of collaboration in the curricular review process; and (3) proposals for altering the curriculum review schedule and processes. We also make recommendations about important next steps in this process.

Impact of Proposals

The group believes that it is important to categorize curricular proposals so that focused time and energy can be placed on higher impact proposals. We envision a process where lower impact proposals are ‘fast tracked’ while still giving opportunities for review and shared governance throughout the process. Higher impact proposals would get additional attention, and in some cases, require notifications of other units prior to being submitted. We began our work by discussing some principles that would assist with determining the impact of proposals. These principles can be found in *Appendix B*. The Taskforce feels that as an academic unit submits a curricular proposal it should be required to complete a checklist that will assist with the categorization of the proposal. The answers to these questions will also be helpful to the academic unit in determining what types of communications are necessary to ensure collaboration and transparency happens throughout the process. *Appendix C* is a list of questions that the Taskforce feels would be important for units to answer as proposals are being developed.

Culture of Collaboration

The group believes that establishing clearly defined workflows for processing curricular proposals will help create and support a culture of collaboration. These workflows should include a period during which all proposals are shared broadly across the entire university community, and during which other units can provide comments or feedback to the unit proposing the curricular change. *Appendix D* sketches out prospective workflows for proposals that have varying levels of impact across the university. In this appendix, Review Level A is for

fast-tracked changes that have minimal impact on other units; Review Level B is for changes that are not so minor as to be fast-tracked, but do not impact degree programs in any other unit; and Review Level C is for changes that impact degree programs in one or more units outside the unit proposing the change. For changes subject to Review Level C, the impacted units would be required to provide feedback or a statement of impact before the proposal could be considered by a university curriculum committee. To support a culture of collaboration and transparency, the group recommends that units proposing changes be required to (1) perform a catalog audit to identify other units whose degree programs will be affected and (2) review enrollment patterns in a course for which changes are proposed in order to identify other units whose students frequently enroll in the course. These requirements could be implemented with either in-house or third-party software systems.

Curricular Review Calendar

The Taskforce believes that spreading out the review of proposals across the fall and spring semesters is essential to creating an effective process. Open review of proposals by all members of the university community is also important. Some proposals (e.g., new programs) must also be approved by entities outside the institution following internal approval, and this requires careful timing. Creating a transparent, regular review cycle is essential to this process. This will require some slight modifications from the Faculty Senate and the Councils. *Appendix E* outlines a potential curricular review calendar.

A software solution to help with the management of the curricular review process is essential if the changes recommended by the Taskforce are to be implemented.

Next Steps

If you endorse the moving forward with these ideas, we recommend these steps:

- Charge a group to examine software solutions to manage the curricular review process. Members of the Registrar's Office, Graduate School and OIT are essential for this work. We recognize that many high priority projects are happening, but if we are to move forward with these changes to curricular review, a software solution is essential.
- Engage Faculty Senate leadership on these ideas with the goal of getting Faculty Senate endorsement of moving forward toward implementation.
- Once Faculty Senate endorsement is achieved and a software solution is identified, the next steps will be to pull together groups to begin planning implementation. It will be important to design and "test drive" the approval workflows in Fall 2021 so that the new curricular review system is ready for use in academic year 2022-23.

Appendix A

Mark Barker, Chair, Undergraduate Council Curriculum Committee

Sara Bradberry, Graduate School

Amy Broemmel, Chair, Graduate Council

Chuck Collins, Associate Dean, Arts & Sciences

Alison Connor, Office of the University Registrar

Catherine Cox, Graduate School

R.J. Hinde, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Cheryl Kojima, Chair, Undergraduate Council

Laurie Meschke, Chair, Graduate Council Curriculum Committee

John Stier, Associate Dean, Herbert College of Agriculture

Molly Sullivan, Office of the University Registrar

Dixie Thompson, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Appendix B

Definitions for impact of curricular proposals.

The purpose of these definitions is to develop common university-wide terms to describe the potential impact of curricular changes. Important factors for consideration in level of impact include, but may not be limited to: the levels of approval required for the change, the potential impact on other units, and the impact on students.

High Impact Changes

- Any changes that require approval by Board of Trustees (BOT), Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), or our regional accreditor (SACS COC).
- Adding, dropping, or archiving any general education or other high demand or high impact course (e.g., courses that are frequently taken by majors from more than one college).
- Major course revisions to general education or other high demand or high impact course (e.g., changes to enrollment restrictions, credit hours, pre- or co-requisites).
- Programmatic changes that have the potential to impact enrollment patterns and credit hour generation across colleges (e.g., replacing a required course from one college with a required course from another college).

Moderate Impact Change

- Any changes that require notification of BOT, THEC, or SACS COC. (Note – I'm not sure about this – we might want to move this to High Impact – let's discuss)
- Adding, dropping, or archiving a course that is not general education, high demand or high impact.
- Changes to cross-listed courses.
- Programmatic changes that have no impact outside the requesting department/college.

Low Impact Change

- Modification of existing course that does not significantly change course content or impact other units.
- Modification of existing course that does not impact units outside of the unit requesting the change.
- Adding courses such as special topics, directed readings, independent study, or senior thesis
- Making a course repeatable or increasing the repeatability of a course.
- Adding, removing, or changing a comment
- Removing a registration restriction

Possible Factors that would go towards determining the impact or making decisions in a flowchart:

Course Changes:

1. Who takes this course or is the expected audience? (Majors, College elective, Gen Ed, Elective, Upper Level students, etc.)
2. What is the expected annual enrollment?
3. Does this course meet a requirement? (No, Major/Minor required, Major/Minor elective, College requirement, Gen Ed)
4. Does this course replace an existing course?
5. How will this course be staffed? (more of an internal question)
6. Will this course change the staffing or delivery of other offered courses? (e.g. will other courses be offered less frequently, or will different instructors (e.g. GTAs) need to be used in other courses) (mostly internal, but could impact other programs if this or related courses are offered less or differently)
7. Will this impact the number of seats offered in other courses? (related to #6)

Program Changes:

1. Does this change involve courses from other units inside or outside of your college? (Either includes them or removes them.) If so, have you notified the other unit and, for inclusion, received their feedback?
2. More broadly, does this change increase or decrease the options students have to take courses from other units? Include replacing electives or categorical lists (which include courses from other units) with specific courses (in or out of other units) or other lists (which include or exclude courses from other units)
3. (For New Programs) Are there possible overlaps with other programs? Which program(s) would be closest to this one in its area(s) of focus?

Appendix C

Curriculum Proposal Checklist

Please submit this checklist for each curricular change request. For each question, check either yes or no. Proposals cannot be forwarded for consideration with a complete checklist. If you have questions about this form, contact the Office of the University Registrar or the Graduate School.

Program Changes

	YES	NO
Does this change require SACS COC, THEC, or BOT approval?*		
Does this change require SACS COC, THEC, or BOT notification?*		
Does this change involve dropping or adding courses offered by other departments (this would include adding or dropping courses on lists of options)?		
Does this involve a change to the delivery modality of an existing program?		
For a new program, does it have potential overlap with other existing programs on campus?		
Does this change the options students have to take courses from other departments? For example, does it replace free electives with required courses (or lists of courses) or does it replace a Vol Core elective with a specific Vol Core course?		

*See curricular submission guide for information on changes that require external approval or notification.

Course Adds

	YES	NO
Is this a new general education (Vol Core) course?		
Will students outside your department be able to enroll in this course?		
Does this new course have pre-requisites or co-requisites?		
Will this new course be cross-listed?		
Does this course replace an existing course?		

Course Drops

	YES	NO
Is the course being dropped a general education (Vol Core) course?		
Is the course being dropped a requirement or elective in any majors?		
Is the course being dropped taken by students from specific programs outside of your department?		
Is the course being dropped a pre-requisite or co-requisite to other courses?		
Is the course being dropped cross-listed?		
Is this course being replaced by a different course or courses?		

Course Modifications

	YES	NO
Is this a course change to a general education (Vol Core) course?		
Is this course a requirement or elective in a program outside of the home department (or college?)?		
Is this course for a pre-requisite or co-requisite to other courses?		
Is this a change to an existing pre-requisite or co-requisite?		
Is this a change to the course credit hours?		
Does this add a registration restriction?		
Does this remove a registration restriction?		
Is this a cross-listed course?		

Appendix D

Proposed Curriculum Review Processes

Review Level A: Fast Tracked Review	Review Level B: General Review	Review Level C: General Review and Review by Specific Units
Relevant proposals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • course name change • description change • credit hour change without influence on other departments (demonstrated by catalog audit) • change program name (drop/add) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not prereq or in required showcase for non-proposing department • creating new major, minor (i.e., courses in proposing department) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prerequisite • In required showcase • Add or drop course outside department from one’s showcase • Creating new major or minor that includes courses from non-proposing department • GE course change
Process Outline		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department submits required materials for curricular changes via Curriculog or OIT system 2. Proposer completes checklist (via Curriculog or automated OIT system) determines review level 3. Submission to College for review and confirmation via automated process (e.g., Curriculog or automated OIT system) 4. General college-approved proposal submitted to Curriculog or automated OIT system for public review and confirmation (2 weeks) 5. College-approved proposal automatically submitted to University Curriculum Committee for next meeting’s consent agenda 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department submits required materials for curricular changes via Curriculog or OIT system 2. Proposer completes checklist (via Curriculog or automated OIT system) determines review level 3. Submission to College for review and confirmation via automated process (e.g., Curriculog or automated OIT system) 4. General college-approved proposal submitted to Curriculog or automated OIT system for public review and confirmation (2 weeks) 5. The relevant portion of the enrollment audit must be posted with the proposal review request (perhaps automated via OIT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silence is an indication of approval 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department submits required materials for curricular changes via Curriculog or OIT system 2. Proposer completes checklist (via Curriculog or automated OIT system) determines review level – early notification of impacted departments is recommended (aspired culture) 3. Submission to College for review and confirmation via automated process (e.g., Curriculog or automated OIT system) 4. General college-approved proposal submitted to Curriculog or automated OIT system for review and confirmation (2-week comment period) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special attention emails/reminders sent to departments that show up on catalog audit, meet other impact criteria, or are otherwise selected by the proposing department • Specific confirmation from designated impacted

	<p>6. Department includes external reviews and proposing department responses in the proposal (semi-automated via Curriculog)</p> <p>7. Submission to College for review and confirmation</p> <p>8. College-approved proposal submitted to University Curriculum Committee for review</p>	<p>departments necessary (silence is not approval; appropriate escalation mechanism needed if no response is received that should reach conclusion within the 2-week period) -- college associate dean can approve for department</p> <p>5. Proposer addresses comments and revises proposal (1-week revision period)</p> <p>6. Proposing department submits revised proposal with external reviews and responses to college to review (semi-automated via Curriculog)</p> <p>7. College review revised proposal and finalizes with proposing department as necessary (1 week)</p> <p>8. College releases approved revised proposal to automated site for 2nd review (2 weeks)</p> <p>9. College curriculum committee votes on motion to move proposal to university level review</p> <p>10. College-approved proposal submitted to University Curriculum Committee for review</p>
NOTES		
<p>Arrange the curriculum committee minutes to put all of the fast-tracked proposals at the front of the agenda (not for curriculum committee to review/approve)</p>		

Appendix E

Proposal for Curricular Review Schedule

Submission Period	Classification Period	Review and Revision Period	Approvals			Earliest Effective Date
			Curriculum Committees	Council	Faculty Senate	
May 1 – Aug 31	Sept 1 – 10	Sept 11 – 30	A: auto approval B: Oct 1 – 15 C: Oct 1 – 15	Oct Nov Nov	Nov Dec/Jan Dec/Jan	Fall calendar year following submission
Sept 1 – 30	Oct 1 – 10	Oct 11 – 31	A: auto approval B: Nov 1 – 15 C: Nov 1 – 15	Nov Jan Jan	Dec/Jan Feb/Mar Feb/Mar	Fall calendar year following submission
Oct 1 – Dec 31	Jan 1 – 10	Jan 11 – 31	A: auto approval B: Feb 1 – 15 C: Feb 1 – 15	Feb Mar Mar	Mar Apr/May Apr/May	Fall calendar year following submission
Jan 1 – Jan 31	Feb 1 – 10	Feb 11 – 28	A: auto approval B: Mar 1 – 15 C: Mar 1 – 15	Mar Apr Apr	Apr/May May/Sept May/Sept	Depends on timing of FS approval*
Feb 1 – Apr 30	May 1 – 10	May 10 -- 31	A: auto approval B: Sept 1 – 15 C: Sept 1 – 15	Sept Oct Oct	Oct Nov Nov	Fall calendar year following submission

*If FS approves by May meeting, the change will go into effect in the fall of that year. If the FS approves by the September meeting, the change will go into effect in the fall of the following year.

NOTES:

- THIS ASSUMES THAT COUNCILS AND FACULTY SENATE WILL MEET IN ALL OF THE FOLLOWING MONTHS TO APPROVE CURRICULAR PROPOSALS: SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL AND MAY. THIS WILL BE A NEEDED MODIFICATION.
- THIS RECOMMENDS THAT CURRICULUM COMMITTEES WILL FOREGO VOTING ON CATEGORY A (AKA LOW IMPACT) PROPOSALS, OR WILL CARRY OUT AN E-MAIL VOTE ON THESE PROPOSALS ON APPROXIMATELY THE 15TH OF THE MONTH, SO THAT THEY CAN MOVE DIRECTLY TO THE COUNCIL FOR A VOTE.
- FORCING CURRICULUM PROPOSALS TO BE REVIEWED AT THE FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL PRIOR TO FACULTY SENATE VOTES, CAN POTENTIALLY SLOW THINGS DOWN AND MAY MAKE THIS PROPOSED TIMELINE IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE. IS IT POSSIBLE TO MOVE CURRICULAR MATTERS DIRECTLY TO FACULTY SENATE WITHOUT THAT STEP?
- ALL OF THIS CONTINGENT UPON DEPARTMENTS ENTERING ACCURATE AND COMPLETE INFORMATION INTO CURRICULOG DURING THE SUBMISSION PERIOD. WE HAVE TO HOLD FAST TO THE SUBMISSION PERIOD END DATES.
- IF ALL NECESSARY APPROVALS ARE NOT GRANTED DURING A REVIEW AND REVISION PERIOD, THE PROPOSAL WOULD AUTOMATICALLY ROLL OVER INTO THE NEXT REVIEW AND REVISION PERIOD.