UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM (UCOC)

MINUTES

January 13, 2021

2:00-3:00 pm

****Zoom Meeting****

I. UCOC DECEMBER 2020 MINUTES

- *Attachment: UCOC December 2020 Minutes*

➔ **APPROVED** with minor edits.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. Grading Scale Requirement in Syllabi (Chi Mak, Chair and Professor of Chemistry)

DISCUSSED Mak reported that he had recently engaged in a discussion with faculty colleagues in his department regarding whether a fixed grading scale—i.e., that a certain letter grade corresponds to a certain percentage earned in the course—is and should be a standard syllabus requirement. The observation was that the grading scale component is listed as optional in the syllabus template posted by the Curriculum Office while it appears to be required in the expanded template posted by the Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET). Members reaffirmed that a fixed grading scale is not a standard syllabus requirement for various reasons, particularly because many courses are graded on a curve and also because the university doesn't impose a standard grading scale for all courses. Mak recommended beginning a discussion with the CET to find out if the difference in templets is a matter of miscommunication, if including a grading scale is simply a recommendation, or if the CET in fact maintains that a grading scale should be included as a best practice.

III. OLD BUSINESS

B. Anticipating and Addressing the Issue of Undergraduate Online Instruction (Continued from previous discussions regarding online curriculum)

DISCUSSED Mak noted that Dr. Andrew Stott had been appointed to Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Dean of the Graduate School and mentioned a developing effort to charge a new committee with some oversight of academic planning and how new programs and innovative offerings are being structured. This committee would serve as a companion committee to UCOC that would facilitate the beginning of the curriculum development process while UCOC approves curriculum toward the end of the process, thereby supporting curriculum development from conception to formal approval. This committee could also be instrumental with regard to providing guidance when programs are intended for an online modality. It was suggested that Provost-level oversight toward the beginning of the cross-collaborative curriculum development process may also be beneficial in addressing complex issues such as revenue centered management and other structural issues that may prohibit cross-collaboration.

Specifically regarding online programs, Mak suggested that many of the questions that should be addressed are concerned with quality—are the programs of a quality that the university would proud of and how do they move USC forward? Will USC be an industry leader or merely offer more programs in a different modality? And what will the metrics be to evaluate this quality? Considering that the graduate online space is already familiar, could UCOC compare undergraduate online programs with graduate online programs to develop metrics for review and to help articulate guidelines for the less familiar undergraduate online space? He said that a strategy to disentangle some of the questions might be to divide up the online education discussion using a four-grid matrix and identify and/or develop metrics for each section of the matrix, noting the various levels of familiarity of each section (while USC has operated primarily online for the majority of a year):

Graduate course (✓)	Graduate program (✓)
Undergraduate course (✓??)	Undergraduate program (✕)

Mak proposed the idea of "intangible" elements—the components that extend far beyond a sequence of course requirements—which support the notion that the value of an academic program is worth more than sum of its parts, and which are the properties of the educational experience that may be most difficult to pin down in the context of online undergraduate programs. Historically, these intangible elements have been assumed to be in place for undergraduate programs since all undergraduate programs have been expected to be offered residentially, so they have never been explicitly targeted in the review process. He suggested that identifying these elements, at the graduate and undergraduate level, may help lead to formulating metrics for reviewing online undergraduate programs. Brian Head, AHS Co-Chair, said that some elements of residential and hybrid programs might also be considered less than tangible such as capstone projects and flipped classroom experiences.

Members noted that, in addition to UCOC efforts to identify and evaluate these elements in the course of reviewing curriculum proposals, the university as a whole would need to be involved with establishing criteria for the intangible elements that would be realized in any given area of the university. Mak agreed and suggested that discussions are taking place that will likely begin to address these issues, noting that the academic planning committee envision by Vice Provost Stott may play a role in the process. He suggested the goal is for UCOC to be able to consider all elements of a program proposal—tangible and intangible—in a collaborative effort to properly evaluate both graduate and undergraduate online programs. Mak reiterated that in this framework online programs are those that are 50% or greater online and that blended programs that don't qualify as "online" wouldn't need as much scrutiny as far as intangible elements are concerned, though blended and hybrid programs would also need to be incorporated into the review formula.

Mak said he would develop an outline of possible future directions and discussion points for review at the next meeting.

IV.   INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Scheduled Special Topics Report

- *Attachment: December 2020-January 2021 Special Topics*

Members Present	**Members Absent**	**Guests**
Diane Badame		
Matt Bemis (Assoc. Registrar)		
Steven Bucher		
Megan Chan (Financial Aid)		
John DeMartini (Support Staff)		
Donna Garcia		
Judy Garner		
Lawrence Green		
Brian Head		
Chi Mak (Chair)		
Danielle Mihram		
Robin Romans		
Geoffrey Shiflett		