



## The University Assessment Council

### Minutes

March 25, 2025

Attendees: Ginger Bishop, Joy Burnham, Chris Coleman, Lucy Curzon, André Denham, Barrett Elder, Sara Kaylor, Dione King, Deidre Leaver-Dunn, Grace Lee, Wilson Lowrey, Joyce Meyer, Albert Pionke, Shae Robinson, Jennifer Roth-Burnette, Tim Salazar, Lance Simpson, Rachel Thompson, Valerie Tisdale, Derek Williamson, Akeisha Young

- The SACSCOC on-site visit in late February yielded good results—no recommendations! In other words, UA is on track to be reaffirmed in December. Thank you, UAC, for all your contributions—not just during the reaffirmation process, but over many years leading up to it. For example, we were found in compliance with all IE/assessment standards at the off-site stage because we were able to provide multiple years of solid assessment reports from educational programs and student/academic support units.
- Barring any unforeseen developments, the only remaining SACSCOC reaffirmation step is to submit the final version of the QEP Proposal to SACSCOC (we were found in compliance with all elements of the QEP standard, 7.2). The on-site visit included “baked-in” consultation and suggestions from the on-site team, which featured a national expert in Supplemental Instruction. We have the option to revise the original proposal based on the team’s feedback. Provost Dalton asked Ginger to lead the revision process (there were several good suggestions) over the next few weeks so that version 2.0 can be submitted ahead of the 7/27 deadline.
- As noted above, the final reaffirmation committee report included no recommendations (i.e., no dings). However, the on-site committee included the following (optional) comment:

*The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee met with [UA representatives] to discuss audit systems that monitor cross-listed undergraduate and graduate courses. The Committee and the institutional representatives also discussed data bases that manage external published syllabi for the general public as well internal syllabi data bases for students and faculty. While it is apparent the institution has adequate processes to monitor cross-listed courses, the Committee encourages the institution explore ways to enhance both processes...*

Dr. Han has already initiated a working group to examine and improve existing processes; he will also provide an update to CAAD on 3/26/25.

The UAC discussion about the topic of cross-listed 400/500 syllabi included the following observations and themes (non-exhaustive list):

- Observations specific to 400/500 syllabi:
  - Clearly, the 500-level course should be more rigorous. That should be reflected in the learning outcomes, which then drive the content, learning activities, assignments, and grading practices.
  - The Graduate School reviews all 400/500 courses (CIM, AMP proposals). Observationally, there appears to be room for improvement on the differentiation front.
  - Training on differentiated rigor and what info to include in 400/500 syllabi might be beneficial (UATA?).
  - We have heard about cases where the Simple syllabi for cross-listed 400/500 courses do not reflect the increased rigor that is intentionally built into the 500-level version.
- More general observations:
  - The way Simple is currently configured, the syllabi are behind a firewall. Anyone UA-affiliated can log in and view all syllabi, past and current. The existing configuration isn't the only possible one. For example, access to current syllabi could be restricted to students enrolled in those courses.
  - Simple houses the official/legal syllabus. In grievance cases where there is a Simple syllabus and a "shadow" syllabus (e.g., in Blackboard), students will use whichever version supports their claims.
  - There is no easy way for CIT to search Blackboard for shadow syllabi.
  - Most academic areas (Colleges) are pushing folks to get syllabi posted by the time registration opens (so that students can see what the class will entail). However, that is not the case across all Colleges.
  - When the Simple syllabus is required pretty early (e.g., for registration; tied to advising), the "finalized" version may not be ready until the beginning of the semester (and may not get updated in Simple). And syllabi may be adjusted as the semester goes along (e.g., after a class session was lost due to a snow day).
  - We do have a [Syllabus Policy](#). It notes, among other things, that "Students must be given timely notice of any changes in the syllabus (elasticity statement)." The Syllabus Policy requires only that the basic elements of the "catalog syllabus," which is used for course approval, is ready for registration. Students also have access to older syllabi. The elements from the catalog syllabus remain the same in Simple Syllabus from one semester to the next. Faculty update or add to these and other required syllabus elements.

- One option in the new Blackboard (Ultra): automated links based on CRN could connect students back to the section-specific Simple syllabus.
  - One example of “detail” differences: the public-facing syllabus might say that 30% of the grade is based on quizzes, while only the shadow syllabus (e.g., for a particular section) specifies the number of quizzes given.
  - There is no easy way to ensure that the version in Simple is/was the finalized version.
  - Faculty view the process of making revisions to the templates in Simple as cumbersome—and “work around” by having the shadow syllabus. Perhaps faculty education about how to report/request revisions would be helpful (e.g., the pre-formatted text boxes that aren't able to be edited by faculty).
  - There are understandable reasons why faculty may be reluctant to publish their “full” syllabus in Simple. One involves intellectual property; another involves fear of litigious efforts to comb or scrape syllabi for certain terms/topics. Faculty might benefit from reassurance that syllabi are protected behind the firewall.
  - Course or program-specific procedures are often where our biggest areas of misinterpretation are in the syllabus: grading processes, attendance procedures, course/clinical expectations, etc.
  - Each course section has its own syllabus in Simple. However, what happens when “supersections” are run through a single Blackboard shell? As we know, Blackboard is decoupled from Banner.
  - Information presented in cross-listed courses is basically the same information. How does one differentiate rigor in the information? Differentiation of rigor is identified through the student learning outcomes and expectations for how students demonstrate achievement/use of the information, i.e., assignments, tests, etc.
- The Graduate School (TGS) offers an Interdisciplinary MA/MS and an Interdisciplinary PhD. The coordination and assessment of those particular programs is handled by TGS. There is also an avenue for other departments to offer interdisciplinary programs through TGS—for example, the Materials Science PhD program is technically housed in TGS but is delivered by Metallurgical/Materials Engineering. In such programs (current and proposed), it is the responsibility of the department(s) delivering the curricula to identify a program coordinator who will, among other duties, coordinate program-level assessment of student learning outcomes.

- Update on 2023-24 assessment reports
  - Participation: Across all unit types, over 99% of expected reports were submitted
  - Feedback trends
    - Degree programs (1 college still to be reviewed): >70% of reports include all key 8.2.a elements (SLOs, assessment findings, comparison by modality where applicable, evidence of seeking improvement in learning [ACTION PLANS]). Reports lacking the last of those elements tend to be (a) new programs or (b) grad programs with low enrollment (limited data)
    - Student/academic support units: Nearly 100% of reports include all key 8.2.c elements (outcomes, assessment findings, evidence of seeking improvement in desired outcomes [ACTION PLANS]).
  - Learning Improvement Achieved audit for academic program reports (2021-24): We're about 60% done with this audit of the last 3 years of assessment reports from academic degree programs. The question: Do we see evidence that a data-informed change led to improved learning (i.e., weighed pig, fed pig, and weighed pig again with better results). Thus far, 38% of reviewed programs reported at least one example of "LIA" during the last 3 reporting cycles. More details to come in the Fall, once the audit is complete.