

# **University Core Curriculum Committee**

## **Annual Report 2019-2020**

### **Introduction**

Academic year 2019-2020 began with the enthusiasm generated by new members to the Committee. This was especially strong this year as eight of the 13 faculty members were new to the group. A decision by the University to offer voluntary separation to senior faculty, and the retirement of others from the committee, created a greater than normal number of vacancies.

The new faculty members and student representatives were exceptional in their efforts to learn the policies and procedures of the UCCC and were thoughtful, vocal, and creative in their deliberations throughout the year.

Adding two additional non-voting representatives from the University Academic Executive Committee proved equally valuable.

Unfortunately, the year ended with the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic and its broad impact on University operations, including UCCC. Just as course delivery was forced online for the final eight weeks of the spring term, so to the work of the Committee.

The meetings continued as scheduled, and work proceeded with remarkable efficiency. Special thanks is due to all members, and especially Holly Scheirman, KU Core Coordinator, Paige Selman, SI Specialist, and Nicole Krambeer, Executive Assistant for their tireless work to keep things running during the final tumultuous months of the year.

## I. Charge to the UCCC

The committee is charged with:

1. Overseeing the composition of the core curriculum;
2. Certifying (and recertifying) courses and experiential learning activities nominated for inclusion as part of the KU Core;
3. Monitoring the achievement of learning outcomes through these courses and activities; and
4. Reviewing and recommending proposals for certificate programs (e.g., GAP, REP, SLP);
5. Envisioning innovative ways to meet learning outcomes.

## II. UCCC Representation – Academic Year 2019-2020

The committee includes one voting representative from each of the five divisions of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and one from each of the professional schools with undergraduate programs. The faculty representatives on the 2019-2020 committee included:

Name	Representing	Term
S. Zimdars-Swartz	CLAS - Humanities Division	2018-2021
Elizabeth Esch	CLAS - International & Interdisciplinary Division	2017-2020
Myunghyun Oh	CLAS - Natural Sciences & Mathematics Division	2018-2021
Eileen Nutting (for School of the Arts)	CLAS – Humanities Division	2019-2020
Jon Brumberg	CLAS - Social & Behavioral Sciences Division	2019-2022
Gregory Crichlow	School of Architecture, Design & Planning	2019-2022
Keith Chauvin (for Allen Ford)	School of Business	2017-2020
Susan King	School of Education	2017-2020
Mike Williams	School of Journalism and Mass Communications	2018-2021
Brad Osborn (for Colin Roust)	School of Music	2017-2020
Brittany Melton	School of Pharmacy	2016-2019
Eileen Nutting	CLAS - School of the Arts	2019-2020
Terry Koenig	School of Social Welfare	2019-2022
Nathan Fulton	Student Representative	2019-2020
Addison Henson	Student Representative	2018-2020
Juila Stopperan	Student Representative	2019-2020

Ex-officio, non-voting members on the 2018–2019 committee included:

Name	Representing	Term
Jill Becker	Libraries	2019-2020
Angela Couture	Medical Center	2019–2020
Susan Klusmeier	Undergraduate Studies	No end date
Holly Scheirman	KU Core Coordinator	No end date
Paige Selman	SI Specialist	No end date

Shannon Portillo, from KU Edwards Undergraduate programs, a representative from the Faculty Executive Committee, and representatives from the University Executive Advising Committee attended regularly.

### **III.Overseeing the Composition of the KU Core: Course Recertifications, Nominations for Inclusion, and Student Petitions**

#### **A. Recertification for Goals**

During 2019-2020, the committee reviewed the recertification reports for courses meeting Goals 3S: Breadth of Knowledge – Social Sciences and Goal 5: Social Responsibility and Ethics:

#### **Recertification Process Results**

**Goal 3S** – total courses reviewed: 91 courses

Recertified: 52 courses (Cross-listed courses counted as one course)

Recertified with comments: 10 courses

Decertified (request of department): 18 courses

Decertified (by determination of the committee): 0 courses

No recertification required (recertified within the last year): 19

No response from department: 10

Sequences: 1

Not taught (on hiatus): 1 course

**Goal 5** – total courses reviewed: 58 courses

Recertified: 34 courses (Cross-listed courses counted as one course)

Recertified with comments: 7 courses

Decertified (request of department): 5 courses

Decertified (by determination of the committee): 2 courses (coding issue)

No recertification required (recertified within the last year): 6

No response from department: 5

Sequences: 5

Experiences: 3

Not taught (on hiatus): 5 courses

The final decisions on these courses represented these categories: recertify, recertify with comments, or decertify. If a course was recertified with comments, the department was provided with specific feedback on concerns that the committee wants to see addressed during the next round of recertification. In only a few instances was a course decertified by the committee and this decision was based on a determination that—even after a request for additional information—the recertification report did not adequately demonstrate that the course met the learning objectives of the Goal.

All decertification decisions, regardless of the reason, will take effect Fall 2021, giving time for the department to appeal and for curricular impact to be assessed.

Courses not taught were put into a hiatus status until the courses are brought back into circulation. These courses were not decertified. It was requested that the department notify the UCCC of when the course was next taught for full re-instatement.

## **B. Course Nominations**

During 2019–2020, the committee received 21 nominations for individual courses. The actions taken on course nominations were one of three options: approve, reject, or request for more information. With a rejection, departments may appeal the decision, a process that involves working with the UCCC Chair to craft a statement of appeal.

The number of courses that fell into each category were:

- Approved: 15 courses
- Rejected: 6 courses
- Request for more information: 3 courses
- Approved after appeal: 1 course
- Rejected after appeal: 0 courses
- Study abroad experience: 1 experience

There were no multi-course sequences submitted for approval this year.

## **C. Student Petitions**

During 2019–2020, the committee received 47 student petitions. These petitions were reviewed first by the KU Core Coordinator to ensure that all required documents were included. They were next reviewed by the UCCC Chair, who took one of three actions: request for more information, reject based on inappropriateness for the learning objectives of the Goal, or advance to the full committee for consideration. The decisions on those petitions were:

- Inappropriate for the Goal (UCCC Chair): 5 petitions
- Rejected (full committee): 6 petitions
- Approved (full committee): 36 petitions

As has been the practice for several years, UCCC created a subcommittee to review student petitions submitted during summer when the UCCC does not conduct regular meetings. The sub-committee received 17 petitions during the summer term. The decisions on those petitions were:

- Inappropriate for the Goal (UCCC Chair): 7 petitions
- Rejected: 8 petitions
- Approved: 9 petitions

## IV.2020 Haufler KU Core Innovation Award

The Christopher Haufler KU Core Innovation Award, funded by the Office of the Provost, honors the creative and forward-thinking work of academic departments in developing or transforming outstanding Core courses, assessing the KU Core learning outcomes, and disseminating the assessments as models of excellent teaching and learning.

The award was presented to the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications for their efforts to redesign JOUR 302 Information Exploration to address the central role of information literacy and source accuracy in news and strategic communications.

To see the full submission, please visit the KU Core website at: <https://kucore.ku.edu/haufler-award>.

## V. Additional UCCC Work

Besides the annual work defined in the Charge, the UCCC also explored ways to improve:

### A. Communication with constituents

The chair of the UCCC produced a “Core Communication” email in September 2019. An additional edition appeared in February 2020. These can be found on the KU Core website at: <https://kucore.ku.edu/ku-core-communications>.

### B. Ad Hoc Review Committee

After the Spring 2019 semester, a proposal to explore a process for regular review of the KU Core at a macro level was developed through the shared effort of FacEx and UCCC leadership. The proposal was approved by both bodies and established an ad hoc committee (3 members from each group) to consider the following committee charge:

*The report of the ad hoc committee may include specific amendments and recommend other features of future macro review of the KU Core. These might consist of frequency (we suggest a five-year review cycle), a timeline for response to committee recommendations by Faculty Senate, UCCC and University administration, the utility of a smaller “conference” committee to resolve differences, and a timeline for the codification of amendments.*

Following meetings through the fall and early spring terms, the committee reached a stalemate in its exploration and discussion of possible ways to construct a protocol to achieve the ideals prescribed by the ad hoc committee’s charge.

With the hire of a new provost in February, and the upheaval caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the committee voted to disband when all University work went online.

A summary report was submitted to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and UCCC in April. It recognized the importance of continuing efforts to build collaboration efforts to produce effective general education at KU.

### **C. Transfer Student Support**

KU continued its leadership role within the Transfer and Articulation Council (TAAC) of the Kansas Board of Regents during 2019–2020 with two representatives on the TAAC. KU was the repeat host of the annual Kansas Core Outcomes Group (KCOG) conference at Edwards Campus. KCOG establishes the learning outcomes for every course in the KBOR matrix of courses transferrable among all universities, colleges and technical schools governed by the Regents. Courses in the TAAC matrix allow students transferring to KU to seamlessly count general education credits matched to equivalent KU courses.

### **D. Data Analysis**

The Core Curriculum was implemented in 2013, with all incoming freshmen from that point onward required to meet the goals of the curriculum. With data for students who completed their degree in four or six years, we examined how those students have met the goals. The Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Success (formerly Undergraduate Studies) and the Office of Institutional Research & Planning have worked throughout the year to aggregate this data.

Data confirms the majority of completed goals were met by coursework completed at KU. The remainder of goal completion was achieved through course credits earned in transferred courses with equivalence to KU courses, approved learning experiences, or performance on the AP, IB, or CLEP exams. (For details on which courses students can earn credit for on the AP, IB, or CLEP exams, see <https://admissions.ku.edu/earningcredit>.)

## **VI. Improving Core Learning Outcome Assessment**

The UCCC continued exploration of ways to improve the assessment of Core Goal learning outcomes as it completed the fifth of six scheduled recertification reviews in Spring 2020. This effort included attendance at a Program Assessment Workshop conducted by the Higher Learning Commission in September.

Attendees representing KU were: Susan Klusmeier, Interim Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies; Jean Redeker, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; Josh Potter, Center for Teaching Excellence; Holly Scheirman, KU Core Coordinator; Mike Williams, chair, UCCC. This group continued discussions originating in the HLC workshop and moved forward with several ideas for improving efforts to align the assessment protocols of the KU Core Curriculum with the accreditation standards of the HLC.

Looking ahead to completing the review cycle in Academic Year 2021, we recommend the group engage with the new provost and the several working groups created in late spring and summer 2020 to respond to the pandemic. The rapid and expansive changes in course pedagogy and delivery modes will require careful consideration of changes to the KU Core and general education assessment.

## **VII. Recommendations for the 2020–2021 Committee**

### **A. Continue to refine the assessment process for KU Core courses**

As the UCCC completes its cycle of assessment in review of all six Core Goals, this provides an important milestone for reflection on the purpose of the KU Core and General Education.

There is little doubt significant changes are in the immediate future for many elements of instruction at KU. The ongoing pandemic will challenge the academic, economic and employment outlooks and the enforcement of social distancing and contamination abatement will require each faculty and staff member to do more to maintain the highest level of student success possible.

The chair of UCCC should become an active participant in the highest-level discussions about general education – offering the unique insight experience with the KU Core can provide. He should also serve as a conduit for faculty and student input derived from UCCC discussions and other constituent outreach.

### **B. Review and amend core goals as appropriate**

The upcoming 2020-2021 committee should consider follow-up to the 2019 survey to guide further improvement of our assessment of learning outcomes.

The intent will be to look toward simplification of processes, clarification of policies and procedures, improving the consistency learning outcome language, and implementation of assessments to assure Goal achievement.

### **C. Improve opportunity for participation by traditionally underrepresented constituents**

The UCCC needs to examine ways to address the lack of diversity of faculty and student representatives on the committee. The past procedures for selection of committee members – by academic unit elections and Student Senate appointments – has not matched the University efforts to improve equity and inclusion on campus.

Outreach to diversity, equity and inclusion groups (faculty and student) in each school and the college could generate creative strategies for improvement.

This should be a major element of future revision of the KU Core procedures, or the replacement general education policies.

### **D. Allow proposals for course additions to the KU Core to include a short in-person presentation by the faculty course developer**

Recent experience with such brief presentations and Q&A during UCCC meetings provided greater clarity of information sharing and reduced send back inquiries to academic units. This reduced the time from proposal to acceptance and raised faculty satisfaction with the course approval process.

#### **E. Clarify the responsibilities and relationship of UCCC and CUSA**

Although communication has strengthened between UCCC and CUSA, the Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Advising in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, there remains a lack of clarity and consistency in the exchange of proposal information causing sometime significant delays. The procedural turn-over of leadership of the committees has unnecessarily confused responsibilities.

This should be a simple, yet critical step toward continuing to address concerns about process transparency and expedience.

Respectfully submitted by,



Mike Williams, associate professor  
Chair, University Core Curriculum Committee 2019–2020