

October 20, 2015

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR CHAIRS  
DEPARTMENT MANAGERS  
DIVISIONAL CURRICULUM ANALYSTS

Dear Colleagues,

Re: Comprehensive Review of Courses Required for Majors

The Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and the Division of Undergraduate Education are asking departments to take on the task of reviewing course requirements in all UC Santa Cruz majors during the 2015-16 academic year. A timeline for the project is at the end of this letter; we request initial assessments of current course requirements and tentative plans by December 4 and updates or completed review information February 1 and April 15.

While above the national average, we fall short of campus goals with only 52% of our students graduating within four years. Only 53% of transfer students finish within two years. These numbers drop to 47% for both groups in the case of low-income students. Given the dramatically rising cost of attending a UC, these numbers fall well short of campus goals. In an effort to reduce time to degree and curricular impaction, we seek your assistance in reviewing the number of courses required for each major, and limiting the upper-division course requirements to 45 units, where possible. Because time to degree is affected by both upper division and lower division course work, we seek your assistance in also reviewing the totality of course requirements for potential reductions or reconfigurations.

CEP reviewed major course and unit requirements in 2011, and discovered that many of our majors are at or close to the 45-unit threshold. Thus, small adjustments in curriculum or requirements may result in achieving the goal. Of course, other majors are further from 45 upper-division units, and more extensive analysis will be required.

Last year, CEP determined that such a review should be a priority for 2015-16, and would be a positive impact on student success, time to degree, and curricular impaction, mirroring work of the Los Angeles and San Diego campuses. As a result of the system-wide Budget Framework agreement, this review is now mandatory and on a shorter-than-planned timeline; nonetheless, it remains a good idea.

During fall quarter, we ask that you, your undergraduate committee, and your faculty as a whole consider the following for each major and each formally-established concentration within each major:

1. Are the current unit requirements the minimum necessary to achieve your program learning outcomes and other programmatic objectives?  
*If not, then units should be reduced.*
2. If the upper division units are greater than 45, can they be reduced through a restructuring of the curriculum?  
*For example, combining 3 courses into 2, or changing a 5-unit requirement to a lower-unit requirement.*
3. Are any of your upper division courses articulated with community colleges, or taken in the second year either in your major planners or in practice?  
*If so, these should be changed to lower division courses. While in the past, lower- and upper-division enrollments counted differently, that is no longer the case.*
4. Are there any lower division courses that are not prerequisites to other courses required for the major?  
*Are these courses truly essential to your program learning outcomes?*
5. Are there additional general education designations that might be appropriate for existing major requirements?  
*While this may not reduce the upper division units in the major requirements, it may reduce the total units required for a student; a positive outcome.*
6. Does your program have alternate degrees or concentrations for students with different academic objectives?  
*Lower-unit majors for students with career objectives other than graduate studies can be an effective way of addressing unit requirements. Programs should avoid including graduate or professional school admissions requirements within major requirements unless they are necessary to achieve program learning outcomes.*
7. Are the unit requirements for your major impacted by course structures outside of your department?  
*We would be happy to convene or join discussions on these issues.*
8. If the major has a qualification policy, does it include upper division courses?  
*Because qualification happens in the second year, these courses should either be removed from the qualification policy or renumbered as lower division courses.*
9. How do the faculty view your program's time to degree data? Is it the length of time you expect for your majors? Do frosh typically take 4 years, and transfers 2 years?

Within the next few weeks, we will provide a link to an online form for reporting review baselines and progress for each major. The form will ask for details of current requirements and proposed changes for next steps, or to facilitate a discussion of the review process and what bottlenecks were found with respect to meeting this challenge.

CEP hopes the review for the 2016-17 or 2017-18 catalogs will take place this academic year: program review during fall and winter quarters, and CEP review during winter and spring quarters, respectively. CEP is committed to doing everything possible to ensure that changes benefiting students will be in the 2016-17 catalog, so programs interested in making changes for the 2016-17

catalog year may submit them as a late addendum to the 2016-17 catalog. Alternatively, degree changes can be provided for pre-approval as 2017-18 catalog modifications.

The schedule for this project is as follows:

- November 9: Online form available. We will be using a local campus form, aligned to system-wide reporting requirements. The campus goal is to ensure that faculty can focus on the substantive review of curriculum. The Division of Undergraduate Education will facilitate the administration and reporting of this initiative.
- December 4: Entry of current majors and major unit requirements into the online form and overview of initial analysis, including whether the program (a) is planning to make changes for 2016-17, (b) is planning to make changes for 2017-18, or (c) is not planning to make changes.
- February 1, 2016: First update on curriculum review from programs.
- January-March, 2016: Submission of late catalog copy addendums for potential 2016-17 implementation, if desired.
- April 15, 2016: Second update on curriculum review from programs.
- Winter and Spring, 2016: CEP review of proposed degree changes, course and catalog changes, and consultation with programs that have not been able to reduce unit requirements.
- Fall 2016: Submission of final proposals and supporting catalog and course revisions for 2017-18.

To help you in your review, the project web page, including time to degree information, may be found at <http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/degreeunits>.

We would be delighted to meet with individual programs to discuss strategies for achieving reduced unit requirements in your programs in support of student success and an optimal learning experience for all.

Thank you,



John Tamkun  
Chair  
Committee on Educational Policy



Richard Hughey  
Vice Provost & Dean  
Division of Undergraduate Education