



MEMORANDUM

To: Julio Frenk
University President

From: Linda L. Neider
Chair, Faculty Senate

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Neider', is written over the 'From:' field.

Date: November 19, 2020

Subject: Faculty Senate Legislation #2020-21(D) – Faculty Senate University Curriculum Committee (UCC) Report on the Area of Knowledge Review

The Faculty Senate, at its November 18, 2020 meeting, noted no objections to accepting the Faculty Senate University Curriculum Committee (UCC) Report on the Area of Knowledge Review.

The report is enclosed for your reference.

This legislation is now forwarded to you for your information.

LLN/rh

cc: Jeffrey Duerk, Executive Vice President and Provost
David Chin, University Curriculum Committee, Chair
Patricia Murphy, Associate Provost, University Accreditation
Karen Beckett, University Registrar
Maria Stampino, Dean, Undergraduate Affairs

Report on the Area of Knowledge Review

By the University Curriculum Committee

Introduction

The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) is responsible for the periodic review of the area of knowledge (AOK) requirements of the University (Faculty Manual, Section B4.15). The AOK requirements were last reviewed by the UCC in AY 2012-13. The cognate system was approved by the Faculty Senate on November 11, 2012, and was effective for new students beginning in fall 2013. The Faculty Senate approved the cognate transfer-student policy on November 19, 2014.

The UCC is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate, and the voting members of the committee consist of one representative from each school/college having an undergraduate program. The Senate Chair, after appropriate consultation, appoints the committee members, and also names the committee chair. The UCC also has ex-officio members that represent other constituencies of the University. The voting and ex-officio members who participated in this review are listed below.

Members:

College of Engineering: David Chin (Chair)

College of Arts and Sciences: Mitsunori Ogihara

School of Architecture: Carie Penabad

Miami Herbert Business School: Vidhi Chhaochharia

School of Communication: Grace Barnes

School of Education: Jennifer Krawec

School of Music: Kate Reid

School of Nursing: Patricia Briones

Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science: Mohammed Iskandarani

Ex-Officio:

Office of the Provost: Maria Stampino, Patty Murphy, Kendee Franklin (Bill Green, 2019-20)

Student Government: Alexandria Hawkins

Registrar: Karen Beckett

Library: Lisa Baker (Kelly Miller, 2019-20)

General Welfare Committee: Dorothy Hindman (Shawn Post-Klauber 2019-20)

The UCC began its current review of the area of knowledge (AOK) general requirements in fall 2019. The key components of this review were (1) a survey soliciting faculty input, (2) a survey soliciting student input, and (3) consideration of all survey responses and developing recommended actions to address the main issues raised by the respondents.

The Faculty Survey

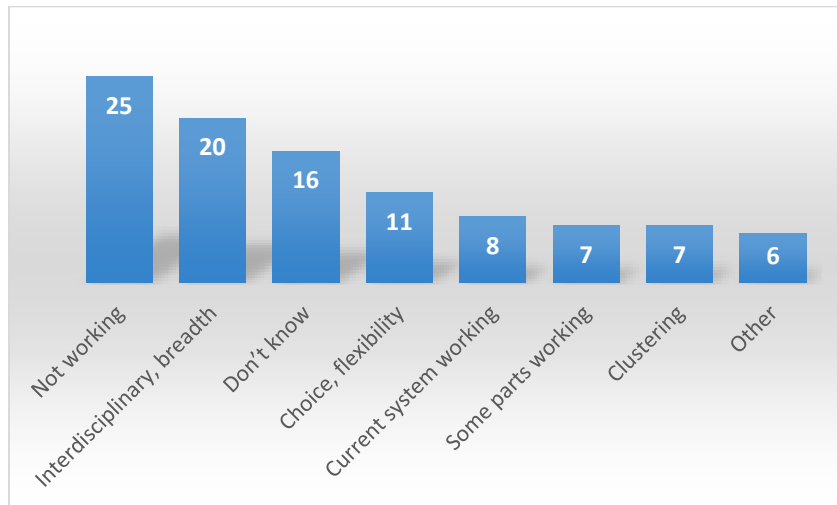
A questionnaire on the cognate system was sent to all regular faculty members in the nine schools and colleges with undergraduate programs. The survey was conducted by the Faculty Senate office, and the questions on the survey were as follows:

1. What aspects of the areas of knowledge and/or cognates are working well?
2. What aspects of the areas of knowledge and/or cognates do you find challenging?
3. How could the University improve the areas of knowledge and/or cognates?
4. Is it in the student's best interest for Cognates to be continued in its current form?

There were 118 respondents to the survey. Summary quantification of the individual questions are provided below.

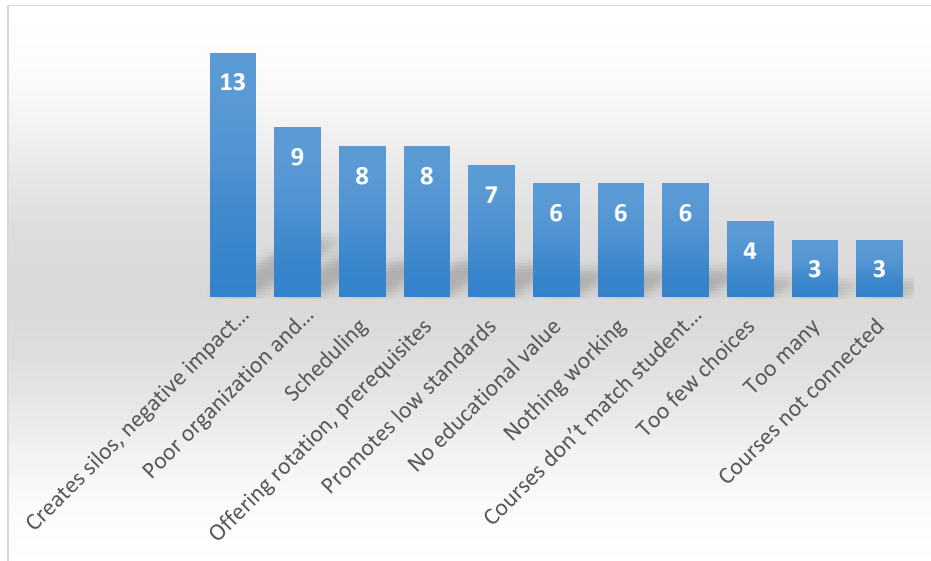
Q1: What aspects of the areas of knowledge and/or cognates are working well?

The responses to this question were varied, but could be grouped in the rank-ordered categories shown below. The top three responses can be categorized as: (1) not working; (2) interdisciplinary/breadth, and (3) don't know.



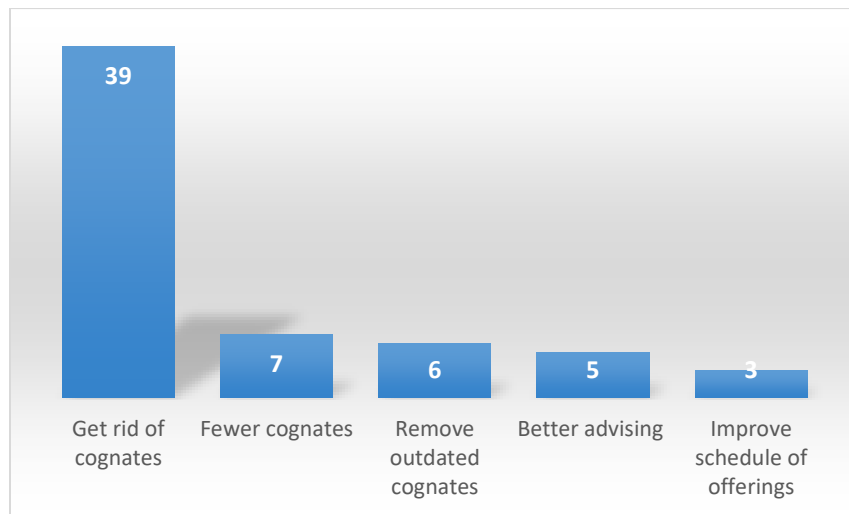
Q2: What aspects of the areas of knowledge and/or cognates do you find challenging?

The responses to this question were varied, but could be grouped in the rank-ordered categories shown below. The top three responses can be categorized as: (1) creates (departmental or programmatic) silos; (2) poor organization and maintenance; (3) scheduling issues; and (3) issues with course rotation and prerequisites; there is a tie in the third-ranked response



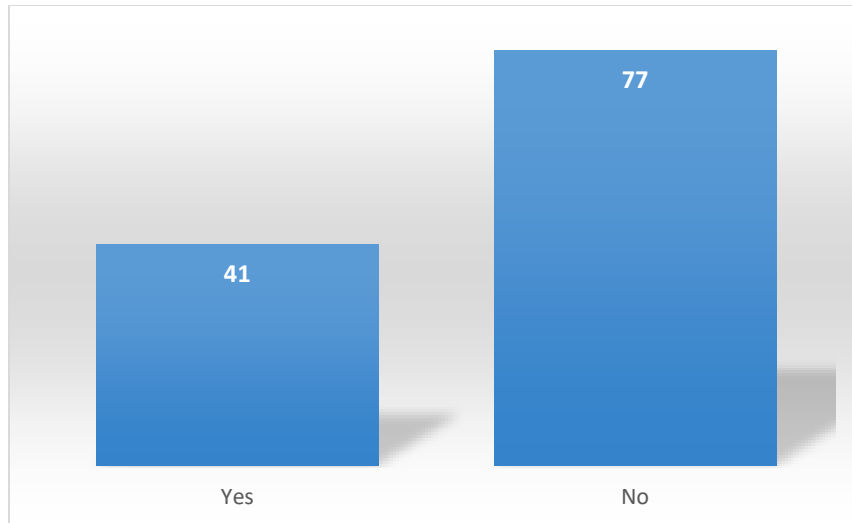
Q3: How could the University improve the areas of knowledge and/or cognates?

The responses to this question were varied, but could be grouped in the rank-ordered categories shown below. The top three responses can be categorized as: (1) get rid of cognates; (2) fewer cognates; and (3) remove outdated cognates.

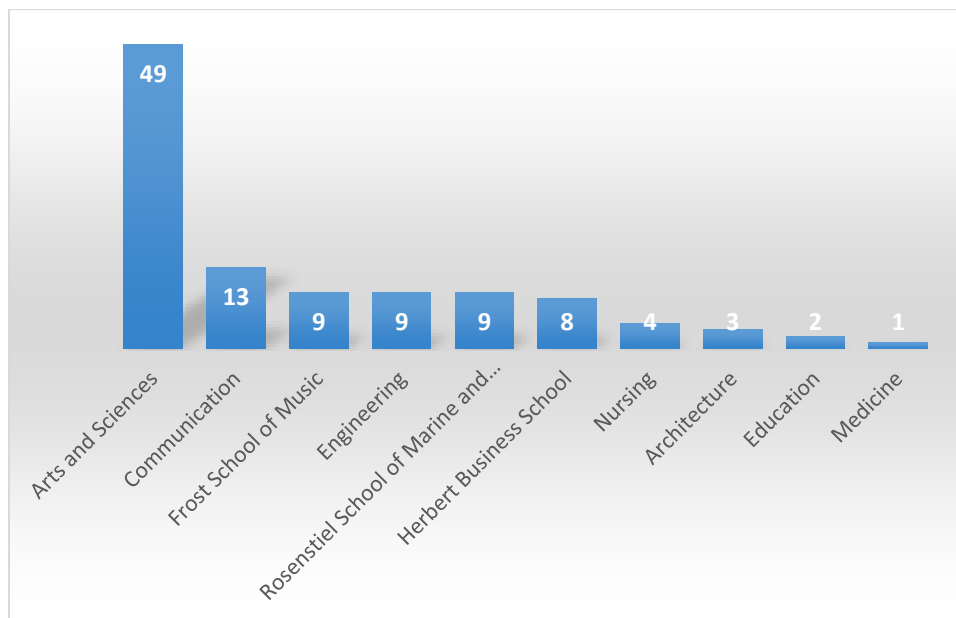


Q4: Is it in the student's best interest for Cognates to be continued in its current form?

This question required a Yes/No response, and the results were Yes-41, No-77.



The distribution of respondents is given below. The majority of respondents were from the College of Arts and Sciences, much less responses from other schools/colleges.



The Student Survey

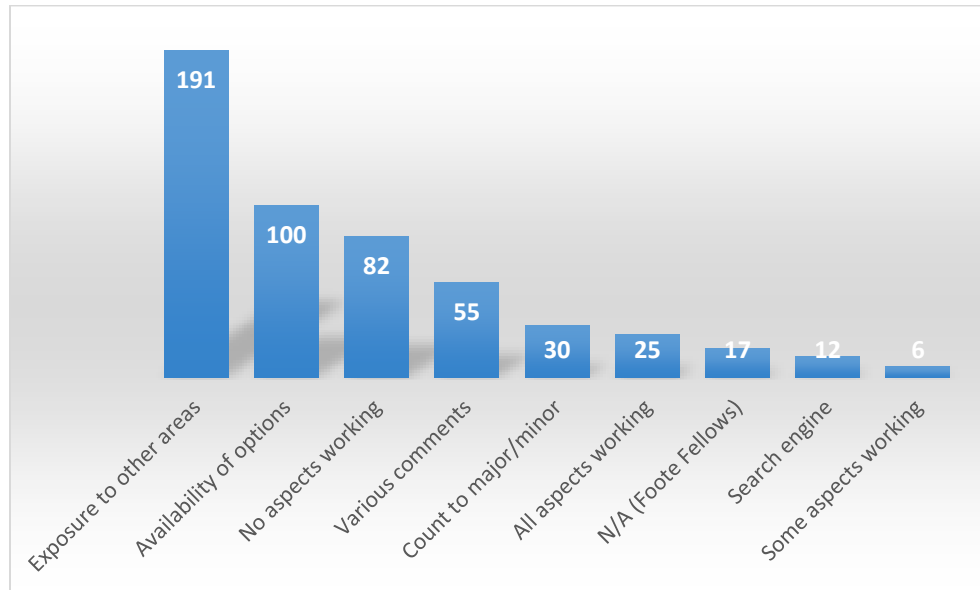
A questionnaire on the cognate system was sent to all undergraduate students at the University. The survey was conducted by the Student Government. The questions on the survey were as follows:

1. What aspects of the cognate system are working well?
2. What aspects of cognate system do you find challenging?
3. How could the University improve the cognate system?
4. Overall, are you happy with the cognate system?

There were 552 respondents to the survey. Summary quantification of the individual questions are provided below.

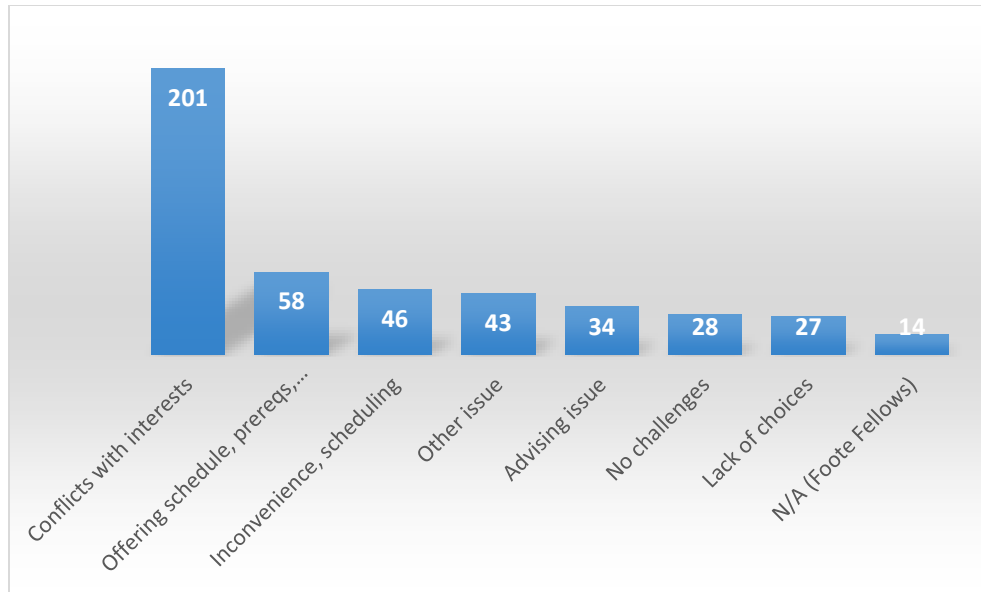
Q1: What aspects of the cognate system are working well?

The responses to this question were varied, but could be grouped in the rank-ordered categories shown below. The top three responses can be categorized as: (1) exposure to other areas; (2) availability of options; and (3) no aspects are working.



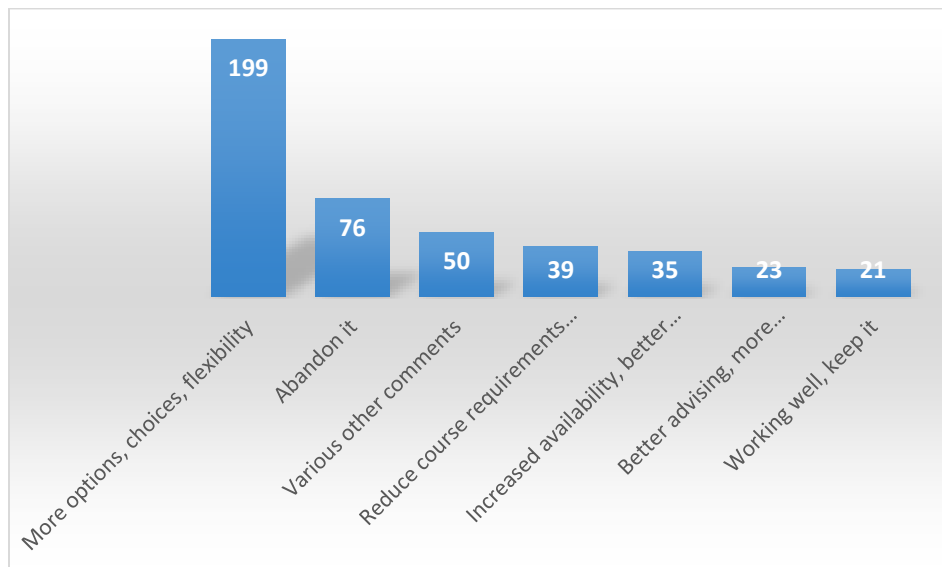
Q2: What aspects of cognate system do you find challenging?

The responses to this question were varied, but could be grouped in the rank-ordered categories shown below. The top three responses can be categorized as: (1) conflicts with academic interests; (2) course offering schedule and prerequisite issues; and (3) inconvenience and personal scheduling issues.



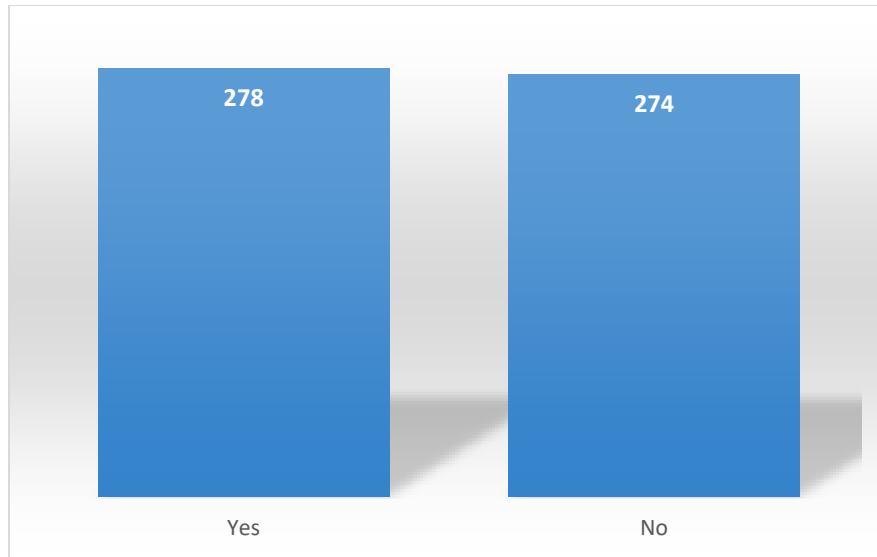
Q3: How could the University improve the cognate system?

The responses to this question were varied, but could be grouped in the rank-ordered categories shown below. The top three responses can be categorized as: (1) more options choices and flexibility; (2) abandon it; and (3) various other comments.

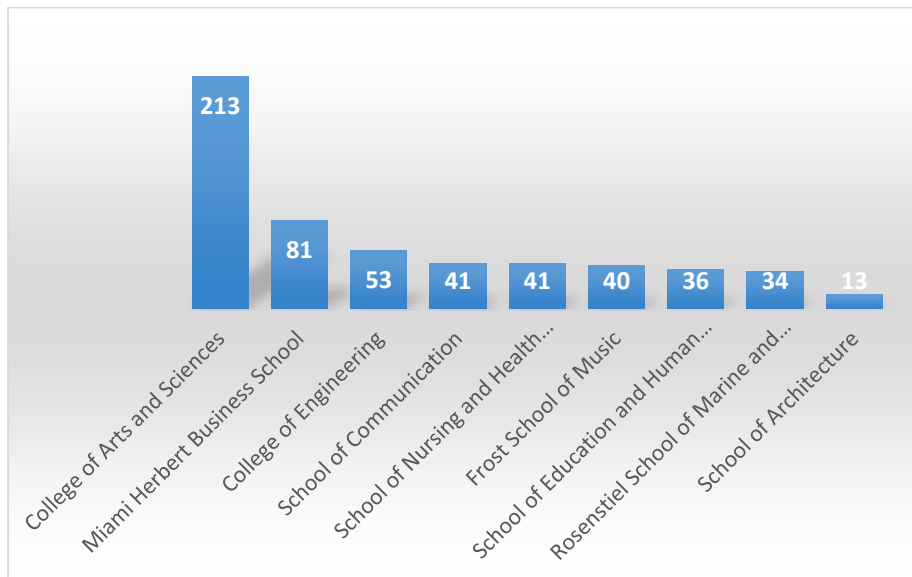


Q4: Overall, are you happy with the cognate system?

This question required a Yes/No response, and the results were Yes-278, No-274.



The respondents were from various schools and colleges, and the distribution of respondents is given below. The majority of respondents were from the College of Arts and Sciences, with the Miami Herbert Business School and the College of Engineering ranking second and third, respectively.



The student respondents also identified their home school, so it was possible to associate the Yes/No responses to Q4 with the home school, and the results are given below. Schools/Colleges with majority unhappiness with the existing cognate system are the Miami Herbert Business School, the College of Engineering, and the School of Architecture; other schools and colleges had majority happiness.

Overall, are you happy with the cognate system?

	No	Yes	Missing	Total
College of Arts and Sciences	45%	55%	0%	213
College of Engineering	60%	40%	0%	53
Frost School of Music	33%	68%	0%	40
Miami Herbert Business School	67%	33%	0%	81
Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science	50%	50%	0%	34
School of Architecture	69%	31%	0%	13
School of Communication	49%	51%	0%	41
School of Education and Human Development	44%	56%	0%	36
School of Nursing and Health Studies	41%	59%	0%	41
What School/College are you affiliated with?	0%	0%	100%	1
Grand Total	50%	50%	0%	553

Evaluation of Survey Responses

The UCC evaluated all of the survey responses prior to developing recommended actions. Clear impressions from the survey responses were that the majority of faculty respondents are not happy with the current form of the cognate system, and that student respondents are split on the issue. The UCC primarily focused on the common issues raised by both faculty and student respondents, and what actions could be taken to address these issues; the UCC also considered what aspects of the cognate system are working. The aspects of the cognate system that are working and the key issues to be addressed were identified as follows:

Working

- Interdisciplinary exposure
- Promotes having students with diverse backgrounds in classes

Need Improvement

- The cognate system is not flexible enough to match student interests
- There should be more course choices to fulfill the General Education requirements
- Cognate offerings that fit student schedules are needed
- Cognate courses offered “by announcement” and other limits on course availability creates problems for students
- There are too many cognate options
- There is a lack of housekeeping of cognate offerings; inactive cognates need to be eliminated
- There is an inefficient bureaucracy associated with administering the cognate system
- The cognate system does not work well in the STEM and Arts and Humanities areas
- There is a lack of understanding of the cognate system by both students and faculty

- Some departments suffer because of lack of popular cognates or no cognates in their area
- The cognate system creates departmental silos
- The cognate search engine needs improvement
- The specific problems with the cognate system differ across schools and colleges
- Students perceive that they are taking cognates just to “check boxes”
- There seems to be some envy of Foote Fellows who do not have to take cognates
- Consideration should be given to the post-COVID mode of course offering

Recommended Actions

Pursuant to extensive UCC review and discussion of the faculty and student input, the following actions are unanimously recommended by the voting members of the UCC to address the issues raised by the faculty and students:

1. Individualized cognates will be made available to all students. University courses that meet the general education requirements will each be categorized as AH, PS, or STEM; students will be able to construct their AH/PS/STEM cognate by simply choosing three courses from the AH/PS/STEM categories. An academic advisor would validate the chosen courses. Additional requirements associated with the composition of individualized cognates are:
 - a. At least one cognate (or area-of-knowledge requirement) must consist of courses from outside the student’s home school/college; students in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) are exempt from this requirement.
 - b. Courses that do not meet the SACSCOC requirements cannot be used in an individualized cognate. Such courses include “skills” courses, upper-level courses with multiple prerequisites, courses that are narrowly focused rather than providing a breadth of knowledge, senior capstone experiences, internships, practica, and field experiences. These courses will not be included in the AH, PS, and STEM designations.
 - c. A transfer course with non-UM specific credit hours can be used in an individualized cognate with the approval of the representative of the responsible academic unit (RAU) that most closely aligns with the transfer course.
2. A University-wide advising program will be instituted to ensure that all new freshmen are well informed on the area of knowledge requirements, which can be met by taking cognates and/or minors along with their major area of study.
3. All existing and future cognate courses will be required to have specific semesters in which they are offered.
4. The cognate search engine will be improved to streamline and facilitate cognate and area (AH/PS/STEM) searches. Specific improvements will include the following:
 - a. Simultaneous search by multiple subjects

- b. Provide an alphabetical listing of all cognates
5. Cognates that have not been selected within the last five years will be deactivated.
6. The development of minors will be encouraged to go along with cognate offerings
7. Non-individual cognates assigned to a particular area (AH/PS/STEM) will be required to contain a majority of courses in that area
8. The Bulletin wording will be cleaned up to differentiate between “cognate” and “area of knowledge” requirements

Once the above actions are approved by the appropriate authorities at the University, the UCC will work with the University administration to ensure prompt implementation.

Implementation Plan

A proposed plan for implementing the new individual cognate option is described below. This plan includes estimated target dates for full implementation to begin in Fall 2021. The following key points should be noted:

- Thematic cognates remain the same and allow more flexibility as to which courses can be used to fulfill an area of knowledge requirement. This is due to the fact that the thematic cognate itself fulfills the requirement and not the individual courses within the cognate.
- Majors and minors are more holistic than an individual course, and can be used in lieu of cognates.
- With the new individual-cognate option, individual courses will be used to fulfill an area of knowledge requirement; therefore, fewer courses will be eligible for an area of knowledge designation within an individual cognate. Consequently, the current area of knowledge attributes associated with courses in CaneLink will need to be revised.

Implementation Step 1: One-Time Audit and Revision of Area of Knowledge Attributes Attached to Courses in CaneLink

- The current area of knowledge attributes associated with courses in CaneLink will be inactivated. (Dec. 2020)
- New area of knowledge attributes will be created in CaneLink. (Dec. 2020)
- The UCC will develop and provide a rubric for departments to review each course to see if the criteria are met. (Dec. 2020)
- Departments will review the rubric and determine which courses, if any, meet the area of knowledge criteria. (Jan.-Mar. 2021)
- Schedulers add these area of knowledge attributes to these courses into CIM Courses. (Jan.-Mar. 2021)
- School undergraduate curriculum committees approve the designations using the UCC rubric. (Mar.-May 2021)

- The new designations appear in CaneLink for Fall 2021. (Summer 2021—after registration)
- Schools and Colleges ensure that all existing thematic cognate courses under their jurisdiction are assigned specific semesters in which they are offered.

Implementation Step 2: On-Going Approval Process for Adding, Revising, Removing Area of Knowledge Attributes Attached to Courses in CaneLink

- Departments will continue to use the UCC rubric as a guide when adding, removing, or revising areas of knowledge designations to a course.
- Schedulers will add, remove or revise area of knowledge attributes attached to courses via CIM Courses.
- School UG curriculum committees will review these requests using the UCC rubric as part of the course approval process in CIM Courses.
- The UCC may audit course attributes on a periodic basis.

Implementation Step 3: Identifying Courses Used to Fulfill Independent Cognates

- The independent cognates in each area of knowledge already have plan codes in CaneLink:
 - AT_0080 Individualized Cognate in A&H
 - PS_0070 Individualized Cognate in P&S
 - ST_0026 Individualized Cognate in STEM
- The Registrar’s Office will use the new area of knowledge attributes attached to courses to program the system so that these will automatically apply to an independent cognate once a student declares it.
- The system will not allow courses that do not have the appropriate area of knowledge attribute to count toward the independent cognate.