

University Curriculum Committee

Annual Report

2022 – 2023

The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) is composed of 12 faculty voting members, three Ex Officio members, two representatives from the Administration, two student representatives and one Liaison from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. This year the UCC Chair and Vice Chair held one training session for College Curriculum Committee Chairs on September 20th, 2022 and one training for UCC members on September 6th, 2022. These meetings included discussion of the Curriculum Policy and Procedures Manual, the approval process and working with *Curriculog*. The meeting on September 6th also included discussion and questions posed by new members. These were answered by the UCC Chair (Cade Mansfield), Vice Chair (Carrie Jeffrey) and veteran members of UCC. That format worked well for initiating new members into the detail-oriented, and often time-intensive work of UCC. This year the administrative associate was unavailable to attend the trainings because we were transitioning between Patti Glover and Belinda McElheny in that role. However, the administrative associate usually presents on some of the best practices with *curriculog* at those trainings. A total of 9 other full UCC meetings were held during the 2022 – 2023 academic year. This is up from approximately 7 meetings per year in past years. As Chair I chose to have two more meetings to help us manage the workload. For example, rather than trying to move quickly through 120 proposals at a UCC meeting in one December meeting we had two meetings and covered approximately 60 proposals at each. Holding more meetings may not be an ideal solution but this year the committee preferred that option to the alternative.

The UCC has accomplished a number of important goals this year.

1. In total we reviewed 640 curriculum proposals at the University Curriculum step during the 2022-2023 academic year. The University Curriculum Committee reviewed and evaluated a total of 386 substantive curricular items during the 2022-2023 academic year. The workload for the entire UCC continues to be substantial (No data were submitted for 2020-2021 but data are as follows for recent academic years: 2019-2020 – 399; 2018-2019 – 377; 2017-2018 – 367; 2016-2017 – 249). Workload in the form of non-substantive curricular items was also high this past academic year. A total of 254 non-substantive curricular items were reviewed, a decline from the 460 in 2019-2020, 421 in 2018-2019. These items are reviewed solely by the UCC Vice Chair and the UCC Chair. The non-substantive item review has historically been completed by the chair. However, to reduce chair workload the vice chair took over most of that work in 2022.
2. We formed a subcommittee to address the charge of “Researching the advantages of changing the start of the academic year at Weber State University from Summer semester to Fall semester. The subcommittee, which was chaired by Dr. Susan McKay, addressed this charge. They identified two higher education institutions in the state who have changed calendar start dates from summer to fall (Salt Lake Community College and Brigham Young University). Both are reported to have had successful changeover without loss of student retention (a feared consequence of changing the start date to fall). One of the main disadvantages of making such a change include changing status quo. That is faculty, staff, students, and administrators are accustomed to the system as it currently stands. Yet, advantages of making this change might include:

- Easing the burden on the Registrar’s office of implementing curricular changes into catalog by the time of student registration at the end of spring semester. Starting the academic year later (that is in the fall rather than summer) could push back the start of the new catalog.
- Because registration for fall classes could begin later in the year the change could simplify course scheduling for some departments across campus. That is, rather than needing to create both summer and fall schedules at approximately the same time – a potential concern for some departments – summer and fall scheduling might be disentangled with this change.
- The bookstore could request summer and fall textbooks at different dates rather than simultaneously, giving faculty more time to consider textbook adoption.

Overall, a more formal discussion with the Provost’s Office, Registrar’s Office, and other stakeholders around campus is recommended. One recommendation is to create a Qualtrics survey and collect data from students and faculty about their opinions in making such a change. Hard data would be of great benefit to making the decision. The subcommittee’s full report is attached to the end of this document.

3. The UCC was charged with researching lengthening fall and spring semesters rather than keeping them compressed in order to accommodate a summer term that has a similar number of days as fall and spring. A subcommittee, chaired by Dr. Jonathan Cornell, addressed this charge. The subcommittee’s report is pasted below – However, informal feedback suggests that lengthening fall and spring (that is changing our current system) is not currently a good idea because there is lack of investment around campus in making this change.
 - In light of the fact that some faculty find the current fall and spring semester schedules to be unnecessarily compressed and detrimental to student success (particularly spring), we investigated how Weber State’s academic calendar compares to other USHE schools, including the University of Utah (U of U), Utah State University (USU), Utah Valley University (UVU), Utah Tech University (UTU), and Southern Utah University (SUU). Weber State’s current academic calendar allows for 71 days of instruction in the fall and 69 days of instruction in the spring. This is roughly in line with the other USHE schools, except for UTU, which has a full 15 week fall and spring semester with 74 days of instruction in each, and SUU, which has a 14 week fall and spring semester with 65 days of instruction in the fall and 66 days of instruction in the spring. It is worth noting, however, that no USHE school other than SUU has a spring semester as short as Weber’s – all of the other universities had 70 days of instruction or more in the spring. Furthermore, Weber State’s 3 day final exam period in the spring is unique, as no other school has a final exam period shorter than 4 days. The abbreviated spring instructional period and final exam period allows for Weber State to have a summer semester with a full 14 weeks of instruction and a week of final exams. This is also unique to our institution. All of the other universities with 14 weeks of instruction in the summer did not have a final exam period (it is likely they take their exams in class.)
4. A subcommittee of the UCC was formed to suggest modifications to the CPPM. Updates to the CPPM were made and incorporated. This subcommittee met multiple times throughout the academic year to edit the current CPPM. The edits that we made were editorial (that is dealt with typos, unclear syntax, out of date images in curriculog, etc.) and as such were deemed to not require a vote from the committee.
5. The UCC was charged with “researching the topic of micro-credentials and badges to ensure that language is in compliance with Weber State and USHE guidelines.” A subcommittee was formed to address this charge. Beth Rhoades, as the content expert, led the committee with Cade Mansfield

compiling meeting notes and organizing ideas for presentation. The subcommittee presented at UCC during the spring semester. Because of changes to CPPM last academic year, which included the removal of departmental certificates as a category in CPPM section 2, the committee decided that the priority would be to craft language defining micro-credentials (and badges) as replacements for departmental certificates. This language would be put forth to faculty senate for review and a vote for possible inclusion in CPPM. The subcommittee found no guiding language from USHE for micro-credentials, however, the subcommittee drafted language that appears to be taking hold in certain industries around 'badging and micro-credentialing'. The definitions below were discussed at UCC and eventually voted on, and approved for further faculty senate review.

- *Microcredential* (non-transcripted certificate) Industry-wide terminology used to capture both Certificate of Experience and Digital Badge efforts at Weber State University.
- *Certificate of Experience*: The Certificate of Experience replaces departmental certificates and any certificate that is less than 16 credit hours.
- The certificate of experience enables the registrar's office to begin Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) work, enabling students to earn a few credits toward a degree based on demonstrable work experience.
- The Certificate of Experience is not transcripted and is composed of courses, badges, or both.
- A record of the Certificate of Experience is kept in portfolio.
- *Digital Badge or Badge*: Content less than a two- or three-credit-hour course. Badges are typically 10-15 clock hours of student work.
- Badges consist of a few learning objectives and outcomes from a credit course and contain demonstrable skills that showcase what the student has learned and can do.
- Badges are transcripted in the non-credit portion of a student's transcript. However, badge pathways will be mapped, which may lead to stackability and waiving credit course requirements. Resulting waived requirements will be documented on the students' CatTracks.

This charge may need to be addressed again next year because the language was rejected at Faculty Senate.

Several individuals demonstrated important leadership and service that proved vital for the UCC.

- Belinda McElheney – Although not a formal member of the committee, Belinda's work is vital to the success of the committee. She has done an excellent job transitioning into her new role replacing Patti Glover as administrative associate. Keeping the minutes at these briskly moving, sometimes contentious, UCC meetings is a real challenge and she has worked hard to do that element of the job well. She has also been vital in terms of streamlining record-keeping and other UCC processes this year.
- Carrie Jeffrey – In her first year as UCC Vice Chair Carrie did an outstanding job. As usual she closely read and considered the proposals that she was assigned to review as a deep-reader for the College of Health, the College of Education, and the College of Science. Yet in addition to that work, she also took over reviewing and approving non-substantive proposals with occasional input from the UCC Chair. She was also instrumental in finding and fixing many editorial issues in Curriculum and CPPM. The committee would not have functioned as well as it did this year without Carrie's diligent work.

- Jonathan Cornell – Jonathan’s work chairing the subcommittee on researching lengthening the fall and spring academic calendars deserves recognition. The committee is in debt to his service completing that research. In addition, Jonathan continues to do an excellent job attending all meetings. He carefully thinks through the proposals and can be counted on to make constructive comments.
- Susan McKay – Susan continued to do an outstanding job deeply reading and considering proposals at each meeting. She was a deep reader for proposals emanating from the Colleges of Arts and Humanities, Health, and Science. She made thoughtful and positive comments in all meetings. She helped improve dozens of proposals that we reviewed this year. She also chaired the subcommittee on changing the start of the academic year from summer to fall and did laudable work on that charge. The charge was somewhat ambiguous, yet Susan was able to gain traction and lead her subcommittee in researching the topic. That research culminated in an informative 3-page report that detailed some potential advantages and challenges associated with changing the start of the academic year. Susan has been an ideal UCC member. The committee will be weakened without her contributions as she rotates to new service roles next year.

Recommendations for ongoing or new charges:

1. Ongoing from this year:
 - a. Consider continuing to research changing the start of the academic calendar
 - b. Consider continuing to review and propose micro-credential language.
2. New Potential Charges:
 - a. There may still be too many ‘gray areas’ in curricular procedure that are confusing. For example, the distinction between substantive and non-substantive proposals is sometimes difficult for people to understand and we receive ‘substantive proposals’ (which require full committee review) on ‘non-substantive’ curriculum forms (which require only UCC Chair or Vice Chair review). Cleaning up procedural language will continue to be important.
 - b. Related to #1 above, we often receive proposals that center on admissions criteria. It is not clear whether or not (and under what circumstances) adjudicating admissions criteria is the purview of UCC. This should be cleaned up.
 - c. An ongoing concern for UCC, and therefore for the University, is whether or not the committee members have enough time to fully review and consider their proposals – when the workload is so heavy. One possible way to address this issue is by providing all UCC committee members some degree of course-load reduction. This could be investigated.

Attendance Report

Member Name	Present (out of 9 Possible)	Notes
Mark Adams, ED	9	
Cade Mansfield, SBS, Chair	9	
Susan McKay, A&H	9	
Carrie Jeffrey, HP, Vice Chair	9	
Darcy Carter, HP	9	
Jeremy Bryson, SBS	9	
Thomas Hales, EAST	8	Thomas was excused from the January 17 th meeting
Jonathan Cornell, S	9	
Josh Jensen, EAST	9	
Li Chen, A&H	9	
Wade Kotter, LIB	9	
Sandeep Rangaraju (Sp'22) B&E	4	The B&E reps split the year because of sabbatical
Evan Barlow (F'22) B&E	5	
Jennifer Anderson, Liaison	0	
Beth Rhoades, Ex-O	8	Kim Love replaced Beth Rhoades in October
Miranda Kispert, Ex-O	8	
Sarah Steimel, Ex-O	9	
Casey Bullock, Administrator	8	Amanda Geilman replaced Casey Bullock in November
Isaac Staszko, student	0	
Killupintu Garrison, student	1	
Konstantinos Kambouris	3	

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT
ON
CHANGING THE START OF THE UNIVERSITY YEAR FROM SUMMER TO FALL
MARCH 20, 2023

NOTES FROM SUSAN MCKAY, SUB-COMMITTEE CHAIR

We have discussed this issue for 2 years in UCC. It was first brought up in Spring of 2022. Both years, there was considerable support among committee members for the change, but also some objections and a lot of uncertainty about what it would entail.

Some important things that emerged both from our discussions in the committee and in our research as a sub-committee are as follows:

1. Since the days of Weber State College, the institution has always had a Fall start and a Summer-last academic year. On the quarter system, until 1998, the year ran Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. When we first switched to semesters later that year, the calendar was Fall, Spring, and Summer.
2. The original change to the Summer-first calendar was not prompted not by any academic, student-related, or curricular advantage or need. It was requested by the parent company of Banner when WSU and others in the state switched to the Banner system.
3. There have been, however, some disadvantages to the Summer-first academic calendar that have since prompted other institutions in the state to return to the Fall-first calendar. Salt Lake Community College made the change a couple of years ago, as did Brigham Young University (while not in the state system, they also made a switch.) Both have reported success with the changeover and without loss of student retention, which was feared consequence.
4. Here at Weber, there are some clear advantages to such a change:
 - A. Notably, it would significantly ease the ever-increasing burden on the Registrar's office in terms of implementing the enormous number of curriculum changes and getting the catalogue out by the time students register. That is because starting the academic year in fall would effectively push back the start of the new catalogue by about 2 months.

B. Related to that would be a change in registration dates. Since Summer would be part of the old catalogue year, its registration could take place in March or April as it currently does, whereas Fall registration (using the new catalogue year) would move to June.

Practically speaking, that would greatly simplify creating class schedules for many departments across campus, where both the Summer and the Fall schedules have to be completed on the same day (currently March 1). That is difficult for many department Chairs and Admins, as well as for faculty to change their offerings and develop new courses for two semesters at once.

The Bookstore is also involved in this since book orders for both Summer and Fall are due to the Bookstore at the same time.

C. Some of us on the University Committee feel that these advantages are sufficient to make the changeover, absent any serious detriments in other ways.

5. The Fall-start of the academic year is the norm across the country, even at institutions that have robust summer offerings. The only exceptions our subcommittee could find were a couple of institutions in south Florida which start in Summer. But they have academic reasons for doing so. They want their new freshmen to all start in Summer directly out of high school, and they have required classes that are only taught in summer.

6. BYU has reported no problems with having students register in June. In fact, informal conversations with their registration officers indicate that students are more ready to choose those classes, with less dropping and moving around in courses by having more time to get finished with Spring classes and consider future options.

The same argument could be made for high school students who are busy trying to graduate and/or enjoy their senior year and fail to make the best decisions when forced to register so early. A later registration date would give more time to get them on campus, get them in workshops, etc. and do some valuable recruiting.

7. Things we still need to research:

A. *The cost of such a changeover, in terms of funds as well as labor.* SLCC and BYU would both be good resources for that information.

B. *Who it would affect.* To that end, we would like to survey, at a minimum, Department Chairs and Admins, Student Senate, and Institutional Review – to see how their activities or constituencies would be affected.

We already know that some departments, such as those in Health Professions, have a year-round schedule and might be affected differently or very little by a Summer-last term.

Possibly a survey of the full faculty or wider student survey could follow.

C. We would also like to get more information of possibly other schools outside the state who have changed calendars in either direction.

In conclusion, we feel that this is an important topic that should continue to be pursued and that it might have some very real advantages, both in terms of curriculum, student registration, department workload, and other administrative processes.