

Ad Hoc Committee Review of the University Committee on the Curriculum

Committee Members:

Gerald Urquhart (chair), Associate Professor, Lyman Briggs College and the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. Member of UCAG 2023-24 and 2024-25, former Chair of UCC 2014-15 and 2015-16

Diana Bello-DeOcampo, Associate Professor, College of Natural Science, Department of Integrative Biology. Member of UCAG 2023 to present

Rebecca Malouin, Associate Dean for Global Health and Professor, College of Osteopathic Medicine. Member of University Committee on Undergraduate Education.

A.J. Robison, Professor of Physiology, Director of the Neuroscience Program, Chair of the University Committee on Graduate Studies

Kari Stone-Sewalish, Assistant Director, Office of Accreditation, Assessment, Curriculum, and Compliance

Valeta Wensloff, Undergraduate Director, Media & Information, former UCC Chair

Heidi Pineda, Interim Secretary for Academic Governance

Individuals who also attended meetings:

Stacia Moroski-Rigney, Director, Office of Accreditation, Assessment, Curriculum, and Compliance (AACC)

Joy Davis, University Curriculum Administrator, Office of Accreditation, Assessment, Curriculum, and Compliance

Alexa Allen, Supported Programs Analyst, Office of the Registrar

I. Executive Summary

Per the bylaws, the faculty at MSU have delegated authority to review and approve or reject modifications to the curriculum. The curriculum process at MSU should consist of both curriculum planning and approvals of envisioned changes. The University Committee on Curriculum (UCC) plays a role mostly in the latter, and both UCC and the University Curriculum Administrator play vital roles in curriculum approval and modification for the University.

We have recommendations for modifications of the existing bylaws to clarify the composition of UCC, the roles of the UCC members, and the role of the University Curriculum Administrator (UCA).

The first of the recommendations is the continued existence of the role entitled University Curriculum Administrator, currently filled by Joy Davis (formerly Speas) who has served in this capacity for 30 years. If there is a decision to eliminate this position or if there is turnover, our committee has assessed that this would cause substantial difficulties in the curriculum management and new curriculum approval processes.

Our second major recommendation is the reorganization of duties of the UCA, UCC Chair, and UCC members to give more responsibility to the UCC Chair and improve member engagement and their decision-making role on the committee.

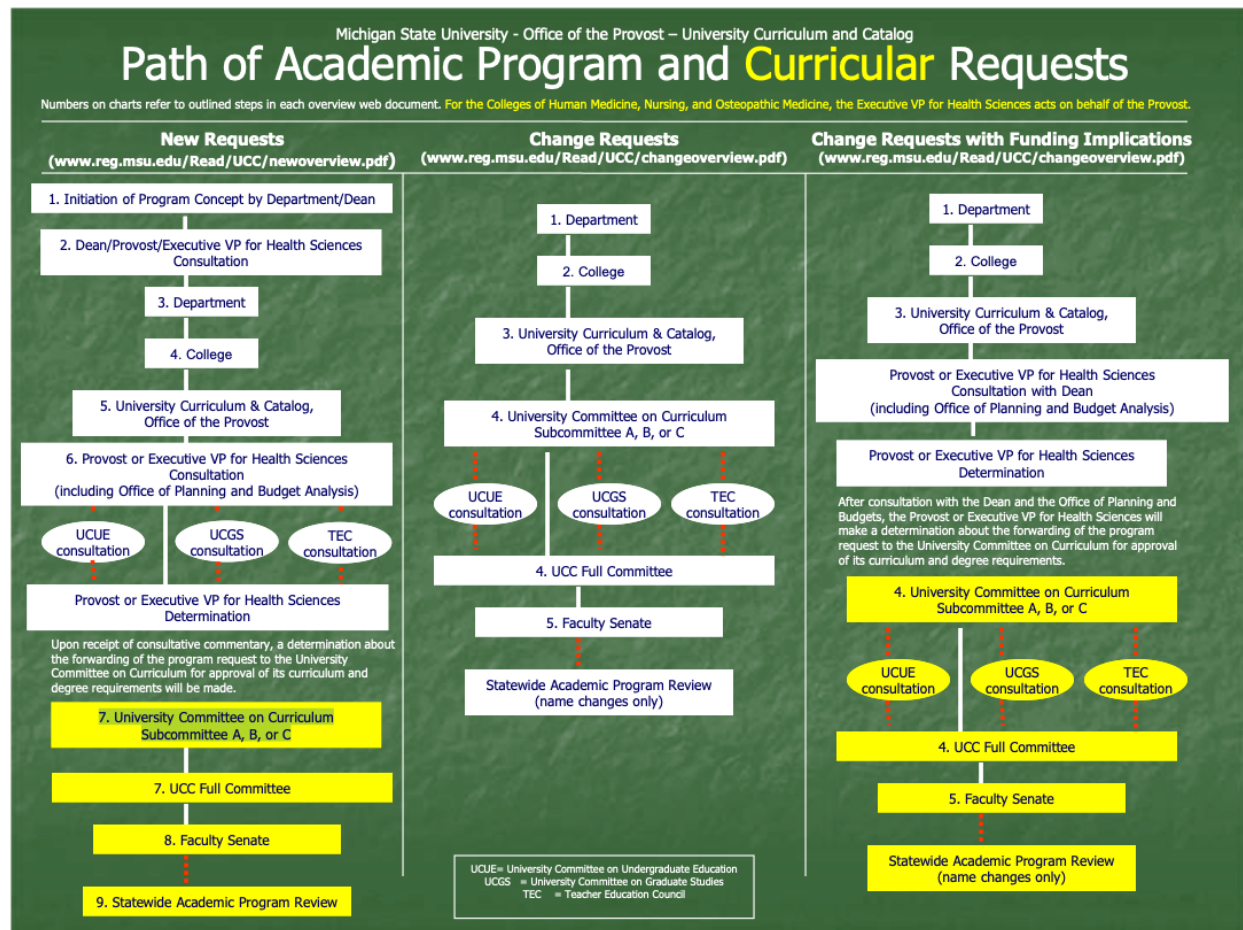
II. Report Structure

- Background on this ad hoc committee and its charge
- The curriculum process at MSU and the roles of AACC and UCC in the process
- The current state of engagement on UCC and contributing factors
- Relevance and utility of the committee's current charge and structure
- Recommendations for improving engagement and aligning the committee's role with institutional needs

III. Process of Evaluation

The ad hoc committee was commissioned by the University Committee on Academic Governance (UCAG) at the request of the AACC. The committee met on eight occasions in summer 2025. During the second and third meetings, the committee had guests from AACC to provide insight into the current state of UCC and thoughts about its future. After the first three meetings, the committee discussed strategies for UCC in the future and developed this report.

IV. The Curriculum Process at MSU



Graphic provided by courtesy of the Office of Accreditation, Assessment, Curriculum and Compliance.

V. The Roles of AACC and UCC in the Curriculum Process

University Curriculum Administrator (UCA) (within AACC) - Currently Joy Davis

- The UCA manages the majority of the curricular approval process and serves as a central point of knowledge, which may not be ideal given the reliance on a single individual for procedural continuity. Currently the UCA is a full-time position that is entirely consumed by the tasks outlined in section X of the report. It is our analysis that the curriculum process would grind to a halt if there were not a well-trained UCA.

UCC Chair

- The UCC Chair has less responsibility in the current practices of UCC than a regular standing committee chair does – the UCA currently takes on those responsibilities. Examples of responsibilities the UCA has taken on are creating and distributing agendas, facilitating the voting process, and overall coordinating committee activities.

UCC Subcommittees A, B, and C Chairs

- The Subcommittee Chairs run the subcommittee meetings that are held monthly during the academic year.

UCC Committee Members:

- Elected to UCC by their respective colleges or units.
- Participate in UCC Subcommittee meetings and participate in the full committee asynchronous sessions that involve a vote through a D2L quiz.

VI. The Current State of UCC

UCC as a whole is broken down into three (or four) subcommittees that meet to discuss related curricular matters. Subcommittee A consists of representatives from the Colleges of Engineering, Natural Science, Lyman Briggs, Nursing, and the medical colleges. Subcommittee B includes the Colleges of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Department of Agricultural Economics), James Madison, Law, and Social Science. Subcommittee C includes the Colleges of Arts and Humanities (RCAH), Arts and Letters, Business (Eli Broad), Communication Arts and Sciences, Education, and Music. A representative from each college is elected to three-year terms and can serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms. A chair of the full committee and subcommittee chairs are chosen from among the members. Although it rarely meets, a fourth subcommittee (D) is comprised of the full and subcommittee chairs.

The monthly committee meeting cycle involves meetings of subcommittees A, B, and C in consecutive weeks followed by an asynchronous full committee vote through D2L the fourth week. Since the COVID pandemic, the subcommittee has been meeting virtually through Microsoft Teams. Prior to the subcommittee meetings, Joy Davis, the UCA, circulates an agenda of the actions to be decided upon during the meeting. These include new programs and program modifications, new courses and course modifications, and program and course moratoria and deletions. Subcommittee members are asked to review the agendas before these meetings. Subcommittee meetings will often have guests

from the colleges whose programs or courses are being discussed. During meetings, the committee moves through the agenda, addressing material related to the guests first, followed by programs and then individual courses. Typical subcommittee actions are to evaluate and modify (wordsmithing mostly) the requests from colleges.

Once all three subcommittees have met, Joy Davis prepares a D2L quiz for the full committee to approve changes that were approved by the subcommittees. This vote occurs as a yes or no vote to approve or disapprove the output of the three subcommittee meetings.

VII. Critical Evaluation of UCC in its Current State

Does the current structure empower meaningful participation from faculty and students?

The current function of the UCC is largely dependent on subcommittees to perform review duties and on the committee's executive secretary that is appointed by the Provost, the University Curriculum Administrator, to perform additional review and virtually all administrative duties. The full committee does not meet synchronously. As described in the following points, this has led to a lack of engagement by committee members, a lack of understanding of the duties of the committee, and an overreliance on the expertise and hard work of the current University Curriculum Administrator that is not sustainable and does not fully reflect the intended role of faculty in providing oversight and exercising delegated authority over curricular changes.

Is the committee's charge and function no longer aligned with meaningful decision-making? Are they still relevant?

Discussions with current and former members of the UCC suggest that the majority of decision-making takes place either before material reaches the UCC or by subcommittees of the UCC. It is also apparent that much of the brute-force editing work of the committee (e.g., determining whether proposals have technical mistakes, overlap with other programs/courses, internal consistency errors, etc.) and the technical administrative work (e.g., working with online systems to move approval processes forward, adding changes to official curriculum software and websites, etc.) are performed by the University Curriculum Administrator, Joy Davis. Thus, although it seems clear that the UCC's charge and function remain necessary, its organization and mechanisms require reframing.

Are there duplicative curriculum efforts among and between academic governance committees?

There does appear to be some duplication of effort between college-level curriculum committees, the University Committees on Undergraduate Education and Graduate Studies (UCUE and UCGS respectively), and UCC. This is likely necessary, however, because there are vastly different realms of expertise at each level. College-level committees contain field-specific experts who can review suitability of proposals, whether the staffing is present and qualified, or how a proposal fits within the educational resources of overlapping departments and with college goals. UCGS and UCUE often lack specific field expertise, but they provide expertise in overall viability of programs, potential overlap with programs in different colleges, and consistency in standards and formatting across all educational programs. UCC's role encompasses all the above but also ensures that proposed changes meet university requirements and have all appropriate approvals. The UCC also acts in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar to formally add changes through the electronic systems utilized throughout the university. This final responsibility relies heavily on the University Curriculum Administrator, Joy Davis.

Is the unit- and college-level process so effective that university-level bodies primarily serve an oversight role rather than a deliberative or decision-making one?

The UCC does primarily serve an oversight role, particularly in ensuring that proposed changes meet university requirements and have all appropriate approvals. This role is necessary, though, as finalized changes to curriculum cannot occur without this oversight and administrative action.

VIII. Adjusting the Bylaws to Address the Current Charge and Structure of UCC

Below are proposed changes to the University bylaws in section 4.5. Red strike through indicates text to be eliminated and green underlined text is new additions.

4.5. University Committee on Curriculum

4.5.1. The members of the University Committee on Curriculum (UCC) shall include a faculty member from each college. UCC ~~shall also~~ will have ~~five~~ five up to three undergraduate student members, ~~of whom one must be a member of ASMSU~~, and ~~two~~ three graduate

student members. The Provost or their designated administrator shall be a member with voice, but no vote. The ~~Provost~~ University Curriculum Administrator shall ~~also name an~~ serve as executive secretary ~~to serve of the UCC as~~ ex officio without vote. ~~The University Registrar~~ The Director of the Office of Accreditation, Assessment, Curriculum, and Compliance shall serve ex officio without vote. The Office of the Registrar, the Office of Undergraduate Education, and the Graduate School may each send one representative to serve ex officio without vote.

4.5.1.1. The UCC will report to the Faculty Senate. The UCC may seek advice from the University Council before reporting to the Faculty Senate on a particular matter; and will do so if the Steering Committee so requests.

4.5.2. The chairperson of the UCC will serve on the Steering Committee and thus on the University Council and the Faculty Senate.

4.5.3. The UCC shall exercise the faculty's delegated authority to review and approve or reject all changes* in undergraduate curricula and degree requirements recommended by the University Committee on Undergraduate Education, and to review and approve or reject changes in graduate and graduate-professional curricula and degree requirements recommended by the University Committee on Graduate Studies. The UCC shall not reject a recommendation from either the University Committee on Undergraduate Education or the University Committee on Graduate Studies without providing a rationale for the rejection and consulting with the appropriate committee. In addition, the UCC shall exercise the faculty's delegated authority to review and approve or reject all undergraduate and graduate courses proposed by academic units.

4.5.4. The UCC shall advise the Provost on criteria for the establishment and deletion of courses and curricula.-

4.5.5. The UCC shall advise the Provost on university curricular development strategy, such as the creation of new academic programs and credentials, integration of emerging technologies, and curricular alignment with university learning goals and strategic priorities.**

*The AACC has defined "changes." UCAG needs to review and provide its interpretation on this ad hoc definition for its use in the bylaws for UCC and UCUE, both committees use "changes."

**This bylaw potentially creates overlap and duplication in the functions of UCC, UCUE, and UCGS. UCAG should consider this and reconcile.

IX. Recommendations for Improving the Curriculum Process at MSU

A critical issue is the level of reliance on the University Curriculum Administrator. Shifting some of the duties currently performed by this administrator alone onto faculty members of the UCC would both increase faculty engagement and reduce the administrative burden on a single individual. Moreover, this would ensure a better situation for continuity, a major concern when only one individual is responsible for so many essential duties. One possible mechanism for accomplishing this could be designating the executive secretary of UCC as a committee member other than the University Curriculum Administrator who could then split this workload. However, we think that the University Curriculum Administrator plays a vital role and we recommend the continued existence of this position, currently filled by Joy Davis. Continuity in this position is vital for proper management of the curriculum process at MSU.

Another key issue is the lack of coordination between colleges before proposals reach the UCC. This could be addressed by making more distinct use of college representatives on UCC and assigning regular meetings between them to coordinate review of proposals. Moreover, a college liaison model is currently being implemented by the AACC that may help facilitate communication between representatives of each college before proposals get to UCC or during their review.

A point that came up repeatedly in discussions with UCC stakeholders is the fact that the full committee does not meet synchronously, and virtually all work is handled by subcommittees. It can be argued that the subcommittees increase efficiency and coalesce expertise, and that is to be encouraged. However, synchronous meeting of the full committee, at least once per semester, could help to improve messaging around UCC and its importance in shaping university curriculum execute the charge of providing University-level curriculum strategy and oversight.

Finally, novel strategies should be considered for improving faculty and leadership engagement on UCC. These could include a small administrative supplement for the UCC chair, advertisement and messaging to departments and colleges about opportunities for faculty to gain educational and leadership experience by serving on UCC, and developing orientation for members of UCC and specific training for the chair to clearly explain their roles and charges and the importance of representing their college. This incentivization should be accompanied by clarification of the specifics of the UCC charges, especially with regards to administrative responsibilities associated with updating courses and programs in university software/systems.

X. Current and Proposed Roles and Duties of University Curriculum Administrator, UCC Chair, and UCC members

University Curriculum Administrator

CURRENT DUTIES of the University Curriculum Administrator (UCA) (within AACC) - Currently Joy Davis

(red = duties proposed to be shifted to UCC Chair)

Sets up UCC meetings 4-5 (Subs A, B, C, and D and full) for 8 months (Sept, Oct, Nov, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, and sometimes May (depending on Spring Break timing))— Usually 24 meeting/year; could be 40 meetings a year max, depending on Sub D (Chairs) and Full Vote

Provides operational/logistics onboarding for UCC members

Receives PROGRAMS or COURSES Forms as submitted

Reviews the submission and either:

- (1) sends it back to college for revision or
- (2) places it on an agenda for either UCUE or UCGS, and possibly for TEC

If sent back, meets with the dept/prog faculty (or multiple meetings) to walk through needed revisions/edits

Once the submission is revised or ready for governance, adds it to the D2L shell for committee access and review

Creates the UCC agenda for each subcommittee--places changes on one of three agendas

Sends agenda to UCUE/UCGS representative, including a list of who should attend to rep the new program

After UCUE/UCGS approval, the UCA is notified by the Chairs

Another meeting with the UCA may happen here if needed

Invites dept/prog representatives for substantive changes to the subcommittees

Releases the agendas to the subcommittees

In the UCC meetings, the UCA answers questions, takes notes, and revises the language in real time.

Creates the quiz in D2L

Once programs are approved (none have failed that have gotten out of subcommittee); sends to RO team, sends to the Director of AACC for HLC submission and CIP code creation

Creates notification for Faculty Senate

PROPOSED DUTIES of the University Curriculum Administrator (UCA) (within AACC) - Currently Joy Davis

(green = new procedures or duties)

Sets up UCC meetings 4-5 (Subs A, B, C, and D and full) for 8 months (Sept, Oct, Nov, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, and sometimes May (depending on Spring Break timing))— Usually 24 meeting/year; could be 40 meetings a year max, depending on Sub D (Chairs) and Full Vote

Provides operational/logistics onboarding for UCC members

Receives PROGRAMS or COURSES Forms as submitted

In conjunction with UCC chair, reviews submissions and either:

- (1) sends it back to college for revision or
- (2) places it on an agenda for either UCUE or UCGS, and possibly for TEC

Once the submission is revised or ready for governance, adds it to the D2L shell for committee access and review

Sends agenda to UCUE/UCGS representative, including a list of who should attend to rep the new program

After UCUE/UCGS approval, the UCC Chair and UCA is notified by the Chairs of UCUE/UCGS

Another meeting with the UCC Chair may happen here if needed

Invites dept/prog representatives for substantive changes to the subcommittees

In the UCC meetings, the UCA answers questions, takes notes, and revises the language in real time.

Creates the quiz in D2L

Once programs are approved; sends to RO team, sends to the Director of AACC for HLC submission and CIP code creation

Creates notification for Faculty Senate

Oversees or coordinates subcommittees findings/reports

UCC Chair

CURRENT Role of the UCC Chair:

Elected by UCC members in spring to lead for following year

Presents report to Steering Committee, Faculty Senate, and University Council

Proposed Role of UCC Chair:

(green = proposed new procedures or duties)

Elected by UCC members in spring to lead for following year

Creates the UCC agenda for each subcommittee--places changes on one of three agendas

Releases the agendas to the subcommittees

Sends agenda to UCUE/UCGS representative, including a list of who should attend to rep the new program

After UCUE/UCGS approval, the UCC Chair and UCA is notified by the Chairs of UCUE/UCGS

Another meeting with the UCA may happen here if needed

In conjunction with the UCA, reviews the submission and either

(1) sends it back to college for revision or

(2) places it on an agenda for either UCUE or UCGS, and possibly for TEC

If sent back, meets with the dept/prog faculty (or multiple meetings) to walk through needed revisions/edits

Presents report to Steering Committee, Faculty Senate, and University Council

UCC Committee Members

Role and Duties of UCC Committee Members:

Elected to UCC by their respective colleges or units

Read communications/onboarding from the UCA; block off their calendars

Review the curriculum changes in D2L (for all subcommittees) prior to the meeting and address any issues in the subcommittee meeting or with the appropriate department/program within their college

Attend their assigned subcommittee (8 meetings per year, plus another possible 8 if the committee requests a meeting for the full vote; chairs could have 8 additional meetings as Sub D)

May bring a guest from their college to represent curriculum changes (but typically this is handled by Joy)

Participate in the subcommittee conversation (wordsmithing, mainly)

Inform their colleges of upcoming curricular changes in an ambassador/ representative role and reflect the unit in their vote

Vote asynchronously in D2L on the last week of the month