

**Undergraduate Academic Standards Committee**  
**Annual Report and Recommendations: 2019-2020 Academic Year**  
**Respectfully Submitted by Irina Khmelko, Chair**

**Committee 2019-2020:**

CHAIR: Irina Khmelko, 2nd year, CAS, PSPS, tenured  
Amanda Clark, 1st year, CAS, Psychology, tenured  
Jonathan McNair, 1st year, CAS, Performing Arts, tenured  
Edwin Murillo, 2nd year, CAS, MCLL, tenure-track  
Abdul Ofoli, 2nd year, CECS, Electrical Engineering, tenured  
Chandra Ward, 2nd year, CAS, SCJS, tenure-track  
Matt Matthews, Interim Vice Provost (Provost Designee)  
Linda Frost (Honors College Designee)  
Joel Wells, University Registrar

**Responsibilities (Faculty Senate By-Laws):**

The function of the Academic Standards Committee is to review and make recommendations to maintain appropriate undergraduate academic standards for the University. It will review matters such as continuation standards, grade requirements for graduation, and standards for academic honors for all undergraduate programs. In addition, it will make recommendations for policies involving academic standards in such areas as academic regulations, academic residency, and non-traditional credit. The academic standards committee may act on requests for studies, advisory opinions, or policy recommendations initiated by the Senate, the administration, standing committees, academic units, and individual faculty members, as well as initiating its own studies and recommendations. Its recommendations will be presented to the Senate where appropriate. In other cases, the committee will send its conclusions directly to the initiating agent with an information copy to the Senate. The chair of the Academic Standards Committee is responsible for circulating the agenda for each meeting to the deans and department heads.

Composition. No fewer than twelve (12) faculty members with no more than three members drawn from any voting division of the faculty; two (2) students; ex officio: Provost designee; University Registrar, designee from the Honors College.

**Annual charge from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee:**

CHAIR: Irina Khmelko (CAS, Political Science & Public Service, tenured)

The committee discussed options for committee work for the next academic year. Among options for the next year, the committee talked about looking at retention data. Another option could be to identify a group of students and follow their progress at UTC over the years. Individual progression data could give us an idea of the percentages of students who get through all four years. The committee also thinks that looking at grade distributions in peer institutions could give us additional insight and a good point of reference. The committee also notes that Faculty and Student handbooks may require attention to make sure that language inconsistent in both.

**Summary:**

The Undergraduate Academic Standards Committee met in person (and the last meeting on Zoom due to pandemic): 09/18/2019, 11/21/2019, 01/24/2020, 03/06/2020, and 04/17/2020. The details of each committee meeting are included in the attached minutes in Appendix A. Additional documents, and the discussion of data can be found in Appendix B and Appendix C.

**The committee discussed, reviewed, and voted on several processes and initiatives, including:**

*A. Accelerated Bachelor to Master Program:*

- Policy on undergraduate students taking graduate courses.
- The Faculty Senate approved the motion from the committee in its March 2020 meeting (the text of the motion is included in Appendix C):

*B. Retention Rates at UTC:*

Committee members noted the following comparing retention rates in 2014 and 2019 (data is discussed in Appendix B below):

- Overall retention rates remain relatively stable;
- Retention rates among Asian students increased from 65% to 75%;

- Retention rates among Alaskan are at 100% in 2019.
- Retention rates among African American students increased from 60% to 67%
- Retention rates among Non-US Residents increased from 63% to 75%
- Graduation rates are up
- There is a decline in retention rates in CAS: Arts division from 69% to 64%, but this appears to be a normal fluctuation.

Committee members pointed to the group of “No College Designated” where the percentage of “Not Retained” students remains much higher than in the other categories. For example, the majority of groups report about 16-18%, but this group reports over 30%.

Therefore, the committee decided to look at it and request additional data to get a better understanding of what is happening with the “No College Designated” group. The committee reasoned that students with no college designation are more likely to be NOT retained, then addressing this issue might help with increasing retention rates.

*C. Undergraduate Certificates:*

- The committee formulated questions that need to be answered in order to design an effective Certificate program at UTC:
  1. What should the minimum GPA be for undergraduate certificates?
  2. How many courses should be required for a certificate? Should a minimum be 9, 12, or something else?
  3. Should we include the requirement that a certificate needs courses from different departments (cooperation between/ among departments)?
  4. What level of courses should be required for a certificate?

**Recommendations Moving Forward:**

- The committee recommends that next year’s committee continues working on monitoring retention at UTC. Specifically, further analysis of the group of “No College Designated” students may provide an important insight into retention at UTC.
- The committee recommends that in order to proceed with work on Undergraduate Certificates, the following steps may be useful to take:
  - a) Survey peer institutions and find examples of how certificates are approached at these institutions.
  - b) Invite guests to one of the committee meetings to answer questions. Depending on the issues to be addressed at that meeting, administrators from different units may be invited.
  - c) The committee believes it is important to have a discussion on how many ‘certificate’ hours may be applied to a major.

## Appendix A

### Minutes of Committee Meetings:

Undergraduate Academic Standards Committee

Committee Meeting

Minutes

September 18, 2019

9:00am, Pfeiffer 206

The committee met on September 18, 2019 as scheduled. The committee:

1. Began its work with Introductions of committee members
2. Reviewed the original charge of the committee
3. Clarified its goals for this semester and then the academic year:
  - The committee will begin working on retention rates at UTC
  - The committee identified administrative divisions
  - The committee identified student populations
  - The Chair will prepare a table with the request for information by the next meeting
  - The committee will meet to approve the request for information
4. Discussion of our plans for this year:
  - The committee will work on retention at UTC
  - The committee will work on identifying some changes to the handbook with regard to undergraduate academic standards at UTC
5. The committee decided that the Chair will send another Doodle survey to find time for our next committee meeting.

Undergraduate Academic Standards Committee

Committee Meeting

Minutes

November 15, 2019

9:00am, Pfeiffer 206

Present at the meeting:

CHAIR: Irina Khmelko

Amanda Clark

Jonathan McNair

Abdul Ofoli

Matt Matthews

Linda Frost

Joel Wells

Guests (present during Q and A session, but left later to allow the committee to deliberate and vote):

Ethan Carver, Assistant Dean of the Graduate School

The committee met on November 15 (had quorum).

1. The committee approved a proposed agenda for the meeting (unanimously).
2. The committee approval of minutes from September 18 meeting (unanimously).
3. The committee worked on the proposal for the Accelerated Graduate Program. The committee discussed the proposed wording and engaged in Q and A session

During the meeting we considered a document that included the current language with a parenthetical statement appended to it that allows students admitted into accelerated graduate programs to apply graduate credit hours to both undergraduate and graduate degrees. The voting members all agreed that was an appropriate statement to add to the current policy. Below is the final statement of the document we considered that includes the parenthetical addition:

"Courses taken for graduate credit may not be applied toward an undergraduate degree (unless in association with an approved Accelerated Bachelors to Master's degree program)."

The committee voted (unanimously) that this proposed change (allowing undergraduate students to take graduate courses and counting these hours towards both – graduate and undergraduate degree) will positively impact academic standards at UTC. The committee recommends that individual graduate programs can set up GPAs for admission into their programs and the Graduate School sets up a minimum GPA for admission at 3.25. The committee believes that

setting a mandatory GPA higher than that would hurt some very able students' chances of getting into the program. It is best (for academic standards at UTC) to give this opportunity to all able students. Individual graduate programs may be in the best position to determine the GPA for admission to their program.

4. The committee worked on the original charge for the committee. Committee reviewed and approved the table for data collection (unanimously). The Chair will now proceed with requesting this data and share it with the committee when received.

## Undergraduate Academic Standards Committee

### Committee Meeting

### Minutes

January 24, 2020

9:00 am, Pfeiffer 206

Present:

Amanda Clark

Irina Khmelko (Chair)

Jonathan McNair

Edwin Murillo

Abdul Ofoli

Chandra Ward

Linda Frost

Joel Wells

The committee met on January 24, 2020.

5. The committee approved a proposed agenda for the meeting (unanimously).
6. The committee approved minutes of November 15, 2019 meeting (unanimously).
7. The committee worked with the retention data from UTC Academic years 2014-2019.

Committee members noted the following comparing retention rates in 2014 and 2019:

- d) Overall retention rates remain relatively stable;
- e) Retention rates among Asian students increased from 65% to 75%;
- f) Retention rates among Alaskan are at 100% in 2019.

- g) Retention rates among African American students increased from 60% to 67%
- h) Retention rates among Non-US Residents increased from 63% to 75%
- i) Graduation rates are up
- j) There is a decline in retention rates in CAS: Arts division from 69% to 64%, but this appears to be a normal fluctuation.

Committee members pointed to the group of “No College Designated” where the percentage of “Not Retained” students remains much higher than in the other categories. For example, the majority of groups report about 16-18%, but this group reports over 30%.

Therefore, the committee decided to look at it and request additional data to get a better understanding of what is happening with the “no college designated” group. The committee reasoned that if students with no college designation are more likely to be NOT retained, then addressing this issue might help with increasing retention rates.

The committee decided to request the following data:

Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Spring 2018
Total Number of freshmen - 100%	Number of second-year students out of the total in 2014 freshmen / % from 2014	Number of third-year students out of the total in the 2014 freshmen / % from 2014	Number of fourth-year students from the 2014 freshmen / % from 2014	Graduated in 2018 (number/ % out of the total in Fall 2014)
Number/ % with “No College Designated” among these freshmen in 2014	Number/ % with “No College Designated” out of the 2014 group	Number/ % with “No College Designated” out of the 2014 group	Number/ % with “No College Designated” out of the 2014 group	Number/ % “No College Designated” out of the 2014 group

8. The committee considered potential solutions to increasing graduation rates among “No College Designated” group:

– 1-hour career development course

- k) Special advisement for students in this category
- l) First-year experience course and investigate/ correlate the number of students who take this course with the number of students in “no college designated category
- m) The committee discussed a potential impact of recommending this course to all students
- n) The committee discussed high impact practices
- o) The committee noted the importance of engaging staff of residence halls in work with some groups of students

Undergraduate Academic Standards Committee

Committee Meeting

Minutes

March 6, 2020

9:00 am, Pfeiffer 206

Present:

Amanda Clark

Irina Khmelko (Chair)

Jonathan McNair

Edwin Murillo

Chandra Ward

Joel Wells

Matt Matthews

The committee met on March 6, 2020.

9. The committee approved a proposed agenda for the meeting (unanimously).
10. The committee approved minutes of January 24, 2020, meeting (unanimously).
11. The committee worked on the issue of Undergraduate Certificates at UTC (see details below)
12. The committee decided to continue to work online and discuss Certificates on Canvas. The Chair will open the discussion board. The committee will vote on the Certificates on its April meeting.
13. The committee members addressed the issue of new retention data. Committee members will review before the April meeting and discuss in detail at the April committee meeting.

Discussion of the Undergraduate certificates – notes:

- Matt Matthews made a brief presentation
- The committee discussed the following points:
- Will certificates start an avalanche of new courses
- Will certificates be offered to people who are NOT students at UTC

- Difference between certificates and minors (hours and NOT necessarily for UTC students only)
- A certificate may address a need for an industry
- Collaboration between departments to avoid duplication
- The requirement of a 2000 level courses
- Examples of how certificates can be of value, e.g., for a cultural awareness (not to insult potential clients)
- Would certificates lead to departments canceling minors?
- Some minors did not catch up (e.g., gerontology), so a certificate may be a better option for some departments
- Student credit hour production
- Who and how will offer certificates
- How would credit for certificates count for the financial aid requirement (would certificate count toward 12 credit hours minimum for federal aid)
- How is it going to be marketed/ publicized? Will UTC work on that?
- Making GPA equal to major requirements for GPA or how?
- Returning students, professionals, should we require the same GPA to enter?
- Certificates will go through regular curriculum proposal process (departments will write and submit curriculum proposals)

The committee concluded this discussion with formulating four questions that the committee will discuss on Canvas before the next committee meeting:

1. What should the minimum GPA be for undergraduate certificates?
2. How many courses should be required for a certificate? Should a minimum be 9, 12, or something else?
3. Should we include the requirement that a certificate needs courses from different departments (cooperation between/ among departments)?
4. What level of courses should be required for a certificate?

Undergraduate Academic Standards Committee

Committee Meeting

Minutes

April 17, 2020

9:00 am

Meeting on Zoom

1. The committee approved the minutes of the March 6 meeting.
2. The committee approved the agenda for the April 17 meeting.
3. The committee discussed Undergraduate Certificates. The committee identified the following four questions as essential to consider before making a decision:

- 1) What should the minimum GPA be for undergraduate certificates?
- 2) How many courses should be required for a certificate? Should a minimum be 9, 12, or something else?
- 3) Should we include the requirement that a certificate needs courses from different departments (cooperation between/ among departments/ units)?
- 4) What level of courses should be required for a certificate?

Concerning the above four questions, the committee discussed the following:

- 1) The committee discussed a minimum GPA, and one of the ideas was to have a minimum GPA of 3.0. Another idea was to leave a minimum GPA to departments.
- 2) The committee discussed how many credit hours should be required for a certificate. 9-15 credit hours per certificate may be a reasonable expectation.
- 3) The committee discussed the difference between the certificates and minors and what the difference may be. Professional skill certificates were one of the ideas. This led to the discussion of collaboration among units at UTC to establish a certificate.
- 4) The committee discussed wording for collaborative programs and discussed whether or not a requirement of “interdisciplinary and collaborative among units” was necessary
- 5) The committee discussed the level of courses and was discussing whether a minimum of 50% of credit hours should be required at 3000 or 4000 levels. Although the requirement may make sense for some certificates, the challenge may be prerequisites for upper-level courses that some departments may require. The committee discussed professional qualifications that may be substituted for prerequisites.

The committee concluded that while it identified critical issues and questions that need to be addressed before finalizing the decision, the committee needs more information to proceed. The ideas for further actions to collect more information included the following:

- Survey peer institutions and find examples of how certificates are approached at these institutions.
- Invite guests to one of the committee meetings to answer questions. Depending on the issues to be addressed at that meeting, administrators from different units may be invited.
- The committee believes it is important to have a discussion on how many ‘certificate’ hours may be applied to a major.

#### 4. Discussion: Retention Data

The committee identified and obtained two datasets. The committee discussed and came up with conclusions based on the first dataset. However, the committee recommends that further discussions are postponed until after the summer. The committee concluded that COVID 19 pandemic introduces new normal to UTC. Therefore, depending on how the situation will be addressed at UTC and system-wide will set up parameters for future discussion of retention at UTC. To conclude, the situation with COVID is relatively new, and the committee needs to wait for system-wide decisions in order to proceed with productive discussions of retention.

### **Appendix B**

Retention Data is sent in a separate attachment to an email with this report.

### **Appendix C**

The Faculty Senate Approved the following motion from the committee:

“Motion from Academic Standards Committee, approved November 15, for Faculty Senate consideration

Faculty Senate approves change in the Undergraduate Catalog:

Courses taken for graduate credit may not be applied toward an undergraduate degree (unless in association with an approved Accelerated Bachelor to Master degree program).

The above language would replace current catalog statements in Academic Regulations and Degree and Graduation Requirements which stipulate:

Courses taken for graduate credit may not be applied toward an undergraduate degree.”