

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
The Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

**Minutes**

February 24, 2022

*Attending:* Cornelia Lang (chair), Roxanna Curto, Jennifer Eimers (staff), Eric Gidal, Alan Huckleberry, Erin Irish, Andrew Kitchen, Cinda Coggins Mosher, Jennifer Rogers, Christine Shea, Jan Wessel, Jenna Yang

*Guests:* three undergraduate students

1. The revised minutes from February 10, 2022, were discussed and approved as written. The minutes from February 17, 2022, were discussed and approved with some slight revision.
2. The committee took up again a discussion of CLAS grading policies focused on undergraduate student perspectives. In addition to the UEPCC student member, two CLAS undergraduate pre-med students and one Engineering student joined to respond to the question: what are students' main concerns related to grading in courses?

These concerns include apprehension about grading schemes that force students to compete with one another. These do not encourage a welcoming learning environment or reflect non-academic work experiences, where collaboration is often a necessary skill. The committee heard that students in these competitive environments will sometimes actively disadvantage their classmates when an opportunity arises by providing, for example, incomplete or incorrect information. Curved grading schemes often leave students unsure of what their grade in a course actually is, which can make decisions about dropping difficult. The student consensus was that curved grading should only help students, not hurt their grades. They would also like to see more frequent and lower stakes assessments because smaller pieces of information are easier to retain and to account for unexpected life events that might affect students on high stakes exam days. Students also appreciate early and frequent feedback on assignments.

One suggestion the students made to allow more flexibility is to give choices in the types of assessments they take during a semester and then in the grades that count toward a final grade (e.g., keeping all essay grades from the semester or taking a final exam to replace one essay grade). In other words, they would like instructors to develop ways to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge in the way the student is best able.

UEPCC members posed follow up questions and comments. There was some discussion of P/N grading, particularly for first-year students, who have differing levels of college preparation, to allow them to acclimate to UI without damaging their opportunities for highly competitive professional and graduate programs. GE CLAS Core guidelines, which require different types of assessments to make up the final grade, not high stakes exams only, may be a valuable model. There is also the question of whether instructors

grade for knowledge of material or for ranking students for professional and graduate schools. In this context and in others, each course and each department style should be considered in College grading guidelines (e.g., writing courses may emphasize multiple drafts to learn effective communication whereas upper-division science courses may use a grading system more in line with ranking students).

The committee noted that the students' anxiety around grades is palpable, and it is an important task for the College to work through. In addition, they noted hearing from social sciences and humanities students, who may have different goals than STEM students, would be valuable.

### 3. Adjournment of meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Cinda Coggins Mosher  
Associate Professor of Instruction, Rhetoric  
Secretary of UEPCC