

Curriculum and Policies Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
October 7, 2025

Voting Members Present: Michelle Halla, John Leafgren, Ally Roof, Dereka Rushbrook, Jeremy Vetter

Non-voting Members Present: Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski, Cassidy Salazar, Abbie Sorg, Alex Underwood

Voting Members Absent: Elizabeth Ghartey, Christopher Sanderson, Amanda Sokan, Eddy White

Chair Ally Roof called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. A quorum was established with 5 voting members.

I. Approval of Curriculum & Policies Subcommittee meeting minutes, 9/9/2025

John Leafgren motioned to accept the meeting minutes from 9/9/2025. Dereka Rushbrook seconded the motion. The motion passed with 5 votes in favor.

II. Discussion Items

A. Policy Roadmap 2025-2026

Presenters: Alex Underwood

The subcommittee reviewed a list of potential policy updates to discuss over the current and upcoming academic years. The list was assembled by the Office of the Registrar based on feedback from multiple offices at the University.

Discussion began:

- One policy on the list, Course Types, had already been discussed and voted on by the subcommittee during the 2023-2024 academic year. The main update was to add a Clinical course type, which was more impactful at the graduate than undergraduate level. The proposal was still under review by the professional colleges before it would continue on to the rest of faculty governance.
- Missing from the list was the Transfer Credit policy, which would need to have its guidelines updated to address Civic Institutions and potentially the foundation areas.
 - If the outstanding pieces of the general education curriculum were wrapped up during the fall semester, this policy could be reviewed in the spring with the Substitutions for Approved General Education Courses policy.
 - Waiting to review the substitutions policy until after the internal audit of course substitutions was complete could offer some insight into necessary policy revisions.

As this was an informational item, no additional action or discussion was needed.

B. Posthumous Degree & Compassionate Certificate of Achievement

Presenters: Ally Roof

The University currently granted posthumous degrees and posthumous certificates of achievement, but did not have a recognition in place for living students that were permanently unable to complete their degree program due to terminal illness. Adding this recognition would create equity around which students received recognition; it was challenging when a student in hospice care met the criteria for a posthumous degree but hadn't passed away. Because of the value a degree had, it would be best to either award a certificate (which had no external value) to these students or to create a new degree type similar to an honorary degree, because standard degrees had academic requirements.

Discussion began:

- Would a student need to have their health status verified by a doctor to be eligible for a compassionate certificate of achievement?
 - The Dean of Students office was the primary contact when a student passed away. A compassionate certificate should follow the same process: the family or student would connect with the dean's office, who would make a professional judgment around whether the student's circumstances met the threshold. If they found the student was permanently unable to complete their degree, it would be suitable to award the compassionate certificate.
 - In the benchmarking, Michigan State University recognized living students unable to complete their degree due to terminal illness/exceptional circumstances, but required a qualified healthcare provider or university physician to confirm the student's status for eligibility.
- This policy update was motivated by a student whose family had reached out because the student was incapacitated with a degenerative disease for many years. The student was administratively awarded a certificate of achievement, and that procedure should be codified in policy.
- How much affiliation should a student have with the University to be awarded a compassionate certificate? Should it be parallel to the posthumous degree and require senior standing? What should the level of academic engagement have been prior to the student's disease/illness?
- Should the recognition be open to students in extraordinary circumstances, like Michigan State University, or specifically for students with terminal illness?
- The current criteria for a posthumous degree at the University was senior standing, a minimum 2.0 cumulative and major GPA, and at least one semester in residence. Any student that passed away while being a student at the University was eligible for the posthumous certificate.
- There had been an instance where a student met the criteria for a posthumous degree, but it was not supported by their college. The current policy does not

require the approval of the college, so the degree was still awarded. Should any of the criteria be adjusted for awkward situations like that, or kept as it was?

- While a posthumous degree listed the student's degree type and major, the posthumous certificate did not carry an academic distinction with it.
- Were posthumous certificates recognized at commencement?
 - According to the policy, yes, but less so as a matter of practice because the certificates were not awarded frequently.
- The Office of the Registrar would bring examples of what the posthumous degree and certificate of achievement looked like at the following subcommittee meeting.
- Was there any prompt for requesting a posthumous degree/certificate, or did someone in the family need to be aware of the policy to initiate the request?
 - When an active student passed away, the dean of students worked with the next of kin to close out the student record. Part of that process included speaking with the family about the potential for posthumous recognition. The family could then request the recognition, and the institution would determine which recognition the student was eligible for.
- How broadly was this policy shared with the advising community? That could be another demographic to help initiate the request. The family of the student would have a number of things to worry about and might not prioritize requesting a posthumous recognition, even with prompting.
- Would there be a pathway for students that started out with a compassionate certificate of achievement to then be granted a posthumous degree later on if they passed away?
 - This could potentially happen, but it seemed unlikely that many families would utilize both. If a student received a compassionate certificate of achievement and then passed away a few years later, not many families would choose to circle back and pursue a posthumous degree.
- If a student met all the criteria for a posthumous degree and passed away years later when they were no longer a student, would they still be eligible despite the lapse in enrollment?
 - Yes, there was not currently a time limit on the request.
- There were no causes of death that were excluded from consideration for posthumous recognition.
- Some members felt the compassionate certificate should have less rigid requirements than the posthumous degree, but should still require a sufficient level of academic engagement.
- Students eligible for a compassionate certificate would likely be unable to engage in a career, so whether or not a certificate was granted would not hinder their future; it would be more so a matter of acknowledging the work they had done.

- Should the compassionate certificate of achievement be named differently? If it had the same criteria as the posthumous degree, but a similar name to the posthumous certificate of achievement, it could be confusing.
 - It could seem inequitable that a student who was alive would be awarded a certificate, and all that would stand in the way of earning the degree would be their death.
 - It could also seem unfair if the compassionate certificate had the same threshold as a posthumous degree, but the posthumous certificate had no credit threshold.
 - Some potential alternative titles for the recognition were certificate of accomplishment and certificate of acknowledgement.
- While it would be easiest if the different recognitions shared a threshold, they could differ if that made the policy read more clearly and fairly.
 - The benefit of a shared threshold between the compassionate certificate and the posthumous degree would be that a student who received a compassionate certificate would be eligible upon their death for the posthumous degree. This would prevent awkward conversations between the University and the family.
 - If the threshold was the same as for a posthumous degree, families might choose to wait until the student passed away to request the degree rather than pursue a certificate while the student was alive. For that reason, perhaps the threshold should be different.

The Office of the Registrar will prepare a policy draft based on the subcommittee's feedback. Discussion will resume at the next subcommittee meeting.

C. Undergraduate Course Syllabus Policy & Template

Presenter: Ally Roof

Some updates needed to be made to the course syllabus policy and template to reflect updated names of offices and resource links. While making these changes, input could be gathered from colleges and units regarding other suggested updates.

- The syllabus policy was currently broken up into pieces required to be on a syllabus, and additional recommended information. Should any of the recommended pieces be required in the policy instead?
- Could the policy be simplified to move away from listing every required policy, and instead list a URL to view all applicable policies? This could mean less frequent need for review of the syllabus policy when required policies were updated.
- Should the policy be amended to require faculty to publish their syllabus?

Discussion began:

- While the policy specified that the syllabus must be shared during the first week of class as either a hard copy or online, there was nothing that required it to be

uploaded to the Learning Management System (LMS). Though this was a common practice, it was not currently enforced.

- What about courses that didn't have a Brightspace page or standard syllabus? One member referenced an honors thesis course comprised of three students. The wording would need to be careful to account for these nonstandard courses.
- Instructors were not currently required to have a Brightspace page for courses.
 - The policy could be updated to require instructors to create a Brightspace page, even if it was only used to house the syllabus.
- The policy could address specific course types that would be required to publish the syllabus. Other policies could benefit from this level of specificity; the Grade Appeal policy referenced a course syllabus, which could be complicated to interpret for courses that did not have a standard syllabus.
 - One member suggested amending the policy text to "the syllabus must be shared within X amount of time, and if an LMS exists, must be published there."
- There was an option to list the URL in a course syllabus for a catalog resource page with all required/recommended statements, but many faculty members were still listing the (sometimes outdated) policies in syllabi instead.
- If the individual policies were pulled out of the syllabus policy, would that leave room for changes to go through unchecked? Revisions were necessary, but input was valuable.
- Should there be more flexibility for the institution to add to the syllabus template?
 - Last year, there were problems with faculty members being recorded during class. Faculty wanted guidance on language to add to their syllabus to restrict this, and so the language was added to the policy as a recommended text.
- Of the syllabus resources, what was actual policy that needed to go through faculty governance, and what could be updated without institution-wide review?
 - There was a need for regular editorial updates to syllabus templates as departments changed names or URLs were updated. These had historically been considered part of a policy update that needed go through the approval process, but might be a waste of faculty governance review. Could these instead be changed with a notice to the undergraduate and graduate councils?
- The general consensus was that a shorter syllabus was preferred, and more likely to be read by students.

The Office of the Registrar would prepare a shortened draft of the syllabus templates for review. Subcommittee members were encouraged to gather additional feedback from their department on desired changes. Discussion would resume at the next subcommittee meeting.

D. General Education Update
Presenter: Jeremy Vetter

Faculty Senate had approved the proposed changes to the General Education Curriculum policy concerning Civic Institutions, which meant that implementation work could now begin for fall 2026. UWGEC would be working on developing language for a Civic Inquiry attribute as well as specifications for Civic Institutions course proposals to follow. The goal was to have instructional support materials ready by late October. There might be a more streamlined proposal option for existing General Education courses that were staying in their EP/BC category but want to add a Civic Inquiry attribute.

Additional discussion was still occurring around second language requirements. The Vice Provost's office had asked UWGEC to decide whether it supported a memo from Eller College of Management asking for an exception to the second language requirement for the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. This item had been discussed in UWGEC and was expected to have an official vote and rationale statement prepared at an upcoming meeting.

Since spring 2025, there had been discussion around the Diversity and Equity attribute and the risk it posed to the University. Currently, any course proposals asking for this attribute were being put on hold. Since attribute definitions were approved to be removed from institutional policy effective fall 2026, it would be easier to replace this attribute with something else in the future once the replacement has been developed.

Discussion began:

- Would existing courses with the Diversity and Equity attribute have a simplified process for shifting to the new attribute?
 - Once recertification was required, all courses would need to be reviewed for the new attribute language. Nothing had been decided on for the interim, and feedback was welcomed. Instructors were encouraged to modify their syllabi in the meantime to select language that was less prone to political complication.
 - Courses with the Diversity and Equity attribute that had a second attribute would retain their designation as general education coursework based on the second attribute. The goal was that the majority of courses with Diversity and Equity as the only attribute would qualify for the replacement attribute, to preserve academic freedom for faculty to teach on a variety of topics.
- Some of the courses with the Diversity and Equity attribute could potentially qualify for the Civic Inquiry attribute once it was established, due to overlapping elements.
- For new courses that had requested multiple attributes including Diversity & Equity, the other attributes were still being reviewed for consideration. Those that had requested Diversity and Equity would be given the option to move the course forward without the attribute, or to wait for review until the two new attributes (Civic Inquiry and the replacement for Diversity and Equity) had been established.
- Due to the prioritization of approving Civic Institutions and Civic Inquiry courses in time for fall 2026 implementation, there might be a delay in review for courses submitted outside of this area.

Discussion ended due to time constraints; members were invited to contact the UWGEC chair with questions and feedback.

The meeting was officially adjourned at 4:59 PM. The next subcommittee meeting would be held on November 4, 2025.

Respectfully submitted by Cassidy Salazar, 10/17/2025