

Undergraduate Council Minutes

September 23, 2025

Attending: Ryan Winet; Stephanie Capaldi; Caleb Simmons; John Leafgren; Michelle Halla; Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski; Eddy White; Allison Lee; Christopher Domin; Greg Heileman; Dereka Rushbrook; Elizabeth Gharthey; Claire McLane; Esteban Hernandez Parra; Alex Underwood; Allyson Roof; Kian Alavy; Abbie Sorg; Cassidy Salazar; Melanie Madden; Paul Wagner; Jeremy Vetter; Lauren Acosta; John Kramkowski; Jennifer Schnellmann; Amanda Sokan; Justine Schluntz; Joost van Haren

Opening Remarks and University Updates

Joost van Haren opened the meeting and turned the floor to Greg Heileman.

Greg Heileman shared several important university-wide updates. He clarified that ABOR (Arizona Board of Regents) is not mandating immediate changes to civics requirements, though they do have civics requirements that can be met through various approaches. The University of Arizona has been meeting these standards through its attribute approach, with assessment data showing students perform very well on civic knowledge and engagement measures.

The President and Provost have completed strategic imperatives with "success for every student" as the first priority. Several new initiatives are launching this year focused on undergraduate education, including campus-wide advising initiatives led by Sharon and retention improvement efforts.

Regarding retention and graduation rates, UA's numbers are among the lowest of Association of American Universities (AAU) peers. The administration has set ambitious targets: improving retention rates to 90% and increasing the one-year graduation rate by 3% annually over the next ten years to reach 70%. A new "Graduation 2026 Project" is underway, identifying students who are 70% or more complete and working with colleges to classify them by likelihood of graduation (green, yellow, red, and purple for major changes needed).

A task force has been formed to study UNIV 101 and bookend courses following complaints received during listening sessions. The task force, co-led by Kia and Cindy Rampin, will meet with stakeholder groups including the Undergraduate Council to gather input.

Academic Advising Update (Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski)

Sharon provided updates on academic advising initiatives and units reporting to her office:

A Center Activities:

- Meet Your Major Fair scheduled for October 1st at Student Development, expecting over 1,000 students based on last year's attendance;
- Law Expo on October 29th with over 100 law schools participating;
- Wayfinders program expanding, with colleges invited to participate in providing quick advising answers at various campus locations.

Advisor Resource Center (formerly Advising Resource Center):

- Focus on training and professional development for advisors;
- Monthly newsletters including advisor onboarding programs;
- Several advisors presenting at National Academic Advising Conference in Las Vegas;
- Shifting from "Lunch and Learns" to "Advisor Master Classes," with September's class focused on campus connections.

Strategic Academic Advising Initiatives:

Three primary focus areas were outlined:

1. Elevating quality and consistency of advising;
2. Strengthening advisor capacity, training, and development;
3. Enhancing student success through structured advising milestones;

Milestone Advising Task Force: A task force is being established to develop structured academic advising milestones across campus. The goal is to ensure consistency when students see advisors and what information they receive, regardless of their college or program. The task force will identify critical points where students need to meet with advisors and develop associated learning outcomes. The charge will be submitted to the Provost by mid-December.

Additional Projects:

- Consistent advisor training standards are being developed through the Academic Advisory Council;

- Review of advisor job descriptions and compensation structures to address inconsistencies across campus;
- Examination of advisor productivity using Trellis reports, revealing significant variation in caseloads and appointment patterns.

Sharon noted that current job descriptions specify 50% of advisor time should go toward student appointments, but this becomes problematic as advisors advance to levels 3 and 4 with additional project and supervisory responsibilities.

Arizona Online Update (John Kramkowski)

Arizona Online reported positive census numbers, exceeding 10,000 students for the first time with room to spare. This milestone is significant as 10,000 is typically used as a threshold for institutional size discussions.

Of the 10,000 students, approximately 900 were new starts. The population is predominantly part-time working adults, requiring different metrics than traditional four-year graduation rates. Arizona Online has now completed 10,000 students total, with completions roughly doubling each year.

Retention Challenges: First-time full-time student retention remains a concern at just over 50% for last year's cohort of 78 students. However, next year's cohort has already doubled in size.

Alternative Pathway Concern: Starting next year, Enrollment Management will offer Arizona Online as an alternative pathway for students not admitted to main campus. An estimated 200-500 students may accept this pathway, creating a significant influx of first-time, full-time students. We are concerned that Arizona Online currently lacks sufficient general education foundation seats for these students and that placing at-risk students in a more at-risk environment could compound problems rather than solve them.

Program Proposals: Proposal season has opened for new online programs (undergraduate and graduate). A webinar is scheduled to explain the proposal process, including market analysis support that Arizona Online can provide. The office has shifted its approach to never say "no" to proposals, but rather to clarify whether investment and marketing support are available.

Registrar's Office Update (Alex Underwood)

Post-census updates included:

- Schedule of classes for Spring 2026 goes live October 1st;
- Shopping carts open October 1st for students to prepare for registration;
- Registration begins November 3rd with differentiated messaging for students with and without holds;
- Planning underway for Summer and Fall 2026 terms, with kickoff meeting October 7th.

Facilities Update: Modern Languages 350 (lecture hall) will be taken offline Spring and Summer 2026 for renovation. The stage and back area will be removed to create a more modernized, accessible lecture hall with similar seating capacity. Alternative lecture hall space has been secured.

Discussion ensued about hybrid/Zoom-enabled classrooms and studio spaces for online instruction. Several spaces are coming online in Chemistry and other buildings to support synchronous online teaching.

UWGEC (Jeremy Vetter)

UWGEC has held two meetings since the last Undergraduate Council meeting. They continue working on second language policy compromise alternatives with the Curriculum Policies subcommittee. A proposal from Eller College will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Civics and Attributes Proposal: UWGEC voted 14-1 to pass the civics policy proposal forward after years of work. This is the first step in a long implementation process. The target is the 2026-2027 academic year, requiring extensive work to designate courses in this new area.

Academic Programs Subcommittee Report (Christopher Domin)

The subcommittee reviewed a new sub-plan for a Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence within Information Science. After robust discussion covering ethical issues and disciplinary appropriateness, the program was deemed important for the university and moved forward unanimously.

Curriculum and Policies Subcommittee Report (Allyson Roof)

The subcommittee has been reviewing general education policy modifications in phases. Changes to math and writing foundations policies were approved in spring, along with removal of attributes from graduation requirements.

Second Language Policy: The subcommittee spent 90 minutes deliberating on three options but voted not to move forward with any, primarily due to concerns about automatically qualifying students with two years of high school second language without proficiency testing. After discussion of UWGEC's suggested revision (requiring three years of high school second language), the subcommittee unanimously supported this approach, though concerns remain about middle school language credits counting toward high school requirements.

This item was tabled for further discussion and will return to subcommittee before coming to full council.

Civics Learning and Civic Knowledge Policy Discussion

Ryan Winet presented the civic learning proposal on behalf of the CLCK (Civic Learning, Civic Knowledge) Advisory Group, which he co-chaired with Michael McKisson.

Background: ABOR revised its General Education Policy in 2022 to include seven specific requirements for "American Institutions" (civics learning): history, principles, founding documents, constitution, Supreme Court cases, civic actions, and economic knowledge. This is the most detailed component of ABOR's general education policy.

Proposed Model: The "breadth and depth" model adds a 3-unit Civic Institutions course requirement while removing one Building Connections course to maintain the 32-unit general education maximum. A fifth attribute (civics) would also be added, allowing courses to incorporate civics elements without meeting all seven ABOR requirements.

This model:

- Keeps total gen ed units at 32;
- Provides scaffolded, modular learning;
- Welcomes diverse disciplines into civics education;
- Allows student customization;
- Maintains consistency with the refreshed curriculum structure.

Discussion: Discussion addressed whether the model would be a single required course or multiple course options. Clarification confirmed that the 3-unit Civic Institutions course would function like Exploring Perspectives and Building Connections courses—multiple courses from various departments meeting common requirements, reviewed and approved by UWGEC.

Concerns were raised about course competition under the budget model and potential proliferation of similar offerings. Others noted this is inherent to general education's "free market" structure. The importance of UWGEC approval in managing course approval, quality control, and reducing redundancy was emphasized.

Discussion addressed whether to expand the policy description to explicitly reference all seven ABOR areas. While Jeremy Vetter proposed more detailed language, concerns were raised about policy flexibility if ABOR changes requirements. The decision was made to keep the description concise and student-focused, with detailed requirements maintained by the Office of General Education in coordination with UWGEC.

Process Concerns: The unusual process of bringing this directly to full council rather than through subcommittee first was acknowledged. This was necessary given implementation timelines and the need to begin course development for 2026-2027 implementation.

Vote: Jeremy Vetter moved to approve the proposal as written. Chris Domin seconded. The motion passed with 15 in favor and 1 abstain. The proposal will now move forward to Faculty Senate.

Consent Agenda

The Bachelor of Science with emphasis in Artificial Intelligence in Information Science was approved by motion and second without further discussion.

Notifications

Program disestablishments were noted, with the Academic Programs Subcommittee requesting additional information from affected departments before finalizing.

The meeting adjourned at approximately