

## **Undergraduate Council Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** January 13, 2026

**Chair:** Joost van Haren

**Meeting Start Time:** Approximately 3:40 PM (after technical difficulties)

**Attending:** Esteban Hernandez Parra; Allison Lee; Allyson Roof; Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski; Alex Underwood; Christopher Domin; John Leafgren; Greg Heileman; Joost van Haren; Abbie Sorg; Dereka Rushbrook; Eddy White; Stephanie Capaldi; Paul Wagner; Jeremy Vetter; Christopher Sanderson; Claire McLane; Lauren Acosta; Justine Schluntz; Michelle Halla; Melanie Madden; Elizabeth Gharthey

### **Attendance and Technical Issues**

The meeting began with technical difficulties regarding audio connectivity between in-person and Zoom participants. Paul Wagner alerted the room that online participants could not hear what was happening in the physical meeting space. After several minutes of troubleshooting and testing with various participants, including Lauren Acosta confirming audio from Zoom, the technical issues were resolved and the meeting was called to order.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Joost opened with approval of the November meeting minutes. One correction was noted: under the consent agenda (Section 6, page 4), the minutes incorrectly stated that "Allyson" moved to approve all consent agenda items. This was clarified to be a different Allison (possibly Allison Lee with an "l" rather than a "y"), and the motion was related to a subcommittee item involving two new emphases and one patron. With this correction noted, the minutes were moved, seconded, and approved (Ryan agreed to change the November minutes to reflect this correction).

### **Reports from Standing Committees and Offices**

#### **Arizona Online**

John provided no updates for Arizona Online, as Greg had not yet arrived at the meeting.

#### **Office of the Registrar (Alex)**

Alex provided several significant updates:

**Spring 2026 Enrollment:** The university has 36,844 undergraduate students registered for spring semester, which represents a slight decrease from previous years but aligns with fall enrollment trends. The number will continue to rise as Arizona Online and other programs add students in coming weeks.

**Fall 2026 Schedule Planning:** Academic unit schedules for fall are due Friday, January 15th. The Registrar's Office will conduct resolution week appointments on February 3rd to determine classroom assignments for in-person classes. Between January 15th and early February, the office will work to fit all in-person classes into available classrooms, then send assignments to departments for any necessary resolution meetings.

**Modern Languages 350 Renovation:** The office secured funding to renovate Modern Languages 350, a steep lecture hall with a problematic "stage to nowhere." The renovation begins in a couple of weeks, and the classroom will be unavailable throughout spring semester. The renovated space will feature mixed seating with both fixed seating and table seating, will be fully accessible for all students, and should serve as an improved venue for lectures and various instructional formats.

**Transfer Credit Reorganization:** Following fall reorganizations, the transfer credit team is now part of the Registrar's Office. The office is working with Sharon's team on implementing changes to transfer credit and transfer support, including website updates to improve transparency for students viewing their transfer credit evaluations.

#### **Academic Advising (Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski)**

Sharon provided extensive updates on multiple initiatives:

**A Center Operations:** The A Center, which serves students with no major selected, is currently welcoming students from the Required Change of Program (RPC) process. At certain points, colleges and departments can indicate that students cannot make progress in their major, requiring transfer to the A Center for major exploration. Typically, 120-150 students go through this process after fall semester, and 400-500 after spring semester. Sharon noted concerning cases of students arriving at the A Center with 100-120 credits completed, suggesting they should have been moved much earlier.

**Health Expo:** The A Center will offer a Health Expo for pre-professional students on February 18th from noon to 3:00 PM in the Union. This event provides opportunities for students considering healthcare professional schools to meet with graduate schools, organizations offering clinical and leadership opportunities, and exam preparation resources.

**Advisor Resource Center (ARC):** The ARC has released spring offerings including:

- Advisor onboarding program
- Advisor master classes, with a January 29th session focused on the graduation project

- Workshops in collaboration with the Registrar's Office
- General education implementation training sessions for the fall 2026 foundations changes

Stephanie Hansen, Director of Advising in the College of Nursing, has led the general education training efforts.

**Campus-Wide Academic Advising Conference:** With Provost support, the university will host its first campus-wide academic advising conference on May 19-20, 2026. The conference will operate both in-person and via Zoom for remote advisors, with consideration being given to bringing remote advisors to campus. The day-and-a-half event will cover policy, processes, practices, advising approaches, resources, and co-curricular activities to prepare advisors before orientation season.

**Strategic Academic Advising Initiative:** Sharon co-chaired two major task forces during fall semester:

1. **Milestone Advising Task Force** (co-chaired with Jim Hunt, Associate Dean in CALS): This group explored mandatory advising touchpoints at various stages of the student experience, following national trends. The task force included advising directors from across campus, Registrar's Office staff, and technology groups (Trellis, New Access Student, Uair). A report with recommendations was submitted to the Provost in late December.
2. **Advisor Salary Task Force** (co-chaired with the head of employee compensation): This group also submitted recommendations to the Provost in late December.

Sharon will meet with the Provost and Vice-Provost to discuss these recommendations and determine implementation plans. Once finalized, information will be shared widely.

**Advisor Training and Development:** The Provost has made significant investments in this area, including:

- Full funding for three advising award winners to attend the Academic Advising Conference in October (airfare, registration, room, and board), compared to previously covering only registration;
- Development of required training based on advisor level and years of experience;
- Building a system that values both college/department-level and campus-level training.

**Key Statistics and Concerns:** Sharon shared several important data points:

- 60% of students change majors during their time at the university;
- Current advisor-to-student ratios range from 108:1 to over 500:1, varying significantly by college and department;
- Best practice recommends 250 students per advisor;
- This variability raises equity concerns about consistent student experiences;

**Advising Syllabus Initiative:** The Provost expressed interest in implementing advising syllabi to establish foundational expectations for students and advisors during the first two years. Sharon provided three different examples from across campus, highlighting the lack of consistency in current practices.

**Transfer Student Success Service Unit:** The new unit directed by Shelley McGrath has hired an advisor to work with prospective transfer students. Academic advising directors from the three largest colleges accepting transfer students participated in the hiring process to ensure appropriate coordination and transition planning.

**Exceptions Audit:** Sharon has been collaborating with the Registrar's Office on an exceptions audit for the advisement report. Key preliminary findings include:

- The audit examined 5,200 students who graduated in Spring 2025
- Records were reviewed for one year (their final year before graduation)
- Over 3,200 students had either an exception or substitution on their record
- These students collectively had over 7,200 exceptions or substitutions
- Average of approximately two exceptions/substitutions per student receiving them
- The auditor (Neil) has disaggregated data by requirement type (general education, major, institutional requirements) and substitution type (transfer credit vs. U of A course)
- The majority of graduating students had at least one exception

The audit will continue with interviews of advising directors from sample colleges to understand their processes for granting substitutions and exceptions. Best practice recommends entering substitutions/exceptions immediately to maintain accurate degree audits throughout the student experience.

Committee members raised concerns about degree requirements that were unsatisfiable, requiring exceptions for any student to graduate. Some courses required for degrees are not offered regularly (such as when faculty go on sabbatical), forcing students to delay

graduation or receive exceptions. These issues raise equity, diversity, quality, and potentially federal financial aid compliance concerns.

Regarding the 60% major change rate, Sharon contextualized this as typical compared to peer institutions (approximately 50% based on data from 30 institutions). Research shows one major change typically doesn't impact time to degree, but second and third changes begin to show effects. Many students changing majors move from highly structured curricula to more flexible programs, often without significant time-to-degree impact. The committee discussed the potential value of meta-majors to reduce administrative major changes while allowing students to explore within broad areas.

### **Office of Undergraduate Education (Greg)**

Greg arrived late from a leadership meeting and provided several updates:

**New Programs Moving Forward:** Three programs are advancing to Faculty Senate:

- Genetics and Genomics (College of Science)
- Agricultural and Applied Economics (CALS)
- Cyber Operations (iSchool)

Greg noted this represents fewer programs than in past years, reflecting a slowdown over recent years. Programs currently in development would be implemented in fall 2027, not fall 2026.

**UNIV 101 Task Force:** Ryan is helping compile materials for the task force report, which will be presented shortly. Greg has a meeting with the Provost late the following week to review major takeaways, with completion expected by end of January. The report will be shared with the Undergraduate Council at the next meeting.

**Second Language Task Force:** UCAAC (University Curriculum Academic Administrators Council) requested to examine the Second Language Task Force recommendations in more detail. Chantelle Warner and Rebecca Gomez will present at the next UCAAC meeting for extended discussion and possible vote.

**First-Year Residency Requirement:** Greg announced that the university will require first-year students to live on campus beginning next year, similar to other institutions. The requirement will likely include exceptions for students living within a certain radius. This policy impacts student success and warrants future discussion.

**Personal Note:** Greg informed the council that Kian and his wife had a baby on January 1st (a 10-pound baby), and everyone is happy and safe.

## University-Wide General Education Committee (Jeremy Vetter)

Jeremy provided two main updates:

**Course Substitutions Policy:** At the mid-December meeting, the committee finally voted on the last piece of the Gen Ed revision package—the course substitutions policy. After extensive discussion over multiple meetings, the committee voted unanimously (13-0) to approve the policy change, which:

- Shifts authority for Gen Ed course substitutions from colleges and college advisors to a centralized entity;
- Specifically designates the Office of General Education to make these decisions for quicker processing;
- Removes the requirement that substitutions be approved in advance of course completion, recognizing that this isn't always realistic (based on Academic Advising Council feedback);
- Aims to provide greater consistency in substitution decisions university-wide;
- Addresses concerns about students changing majors and having previous substitutions questioned.

The committee acknowledged concerns about timely decision-making and discussed the Gen Ed Committee's potential role in setting broader guidelines while an administrative office handles day-to-day decisions. The policy will proceed to the Curriculum and Policy Subcommittee, then to full UGC. Jeremy hopes the exceptions audit data will inform these discussions.

**Civic Requirement Implementation:** The committee is embarking on approving courses for the two-part civic requirement:

1. **Civic Exploration Depth Attribute:** Courses in existing GE categories (Building Connections, Exploring Perspectives) can add this fifth attribute alongside writing, understanding and valuing difference, quantitative reasoning, and world cultures and societies. Seven courses went through a cohort in late fall for Fall 2026 implementation and will move through subgroups this week and full committee next week.
2. **Civic Institutions Breadth Course:** Required for all students starting next academic year. The committee is prioritizing approval of POLS 201 and HIST 150C for Fall 2026, as they already exist, are widely taught, and meet AP exam

equivalencies in U.S. History and American Government. Additional courses are in development with a March 2026 target for Spring 2027 offerings.

**IT Backend Challenges:** Jeremy expressed frustration with delays in updating the UACCS IT backend for new course categories. He expected quick implementation after November approval but hasn't received updates. Currently, special dispensations are needed to move courses through Curricular Affairs with extra work required since the system isn't properly configured. UWGEC is reviewing courses in parallel to expedite approvals when they arrive.

**Understand and Value Difference (UVD) Attribute:** This new attribute replaces the eliminated D&E attribute. The committee will process transitions for previous D&E courses this spring, allowing faculty to either drop the attribute or adopt UVD, Civic Exploration, or other appropriate attributes.

### **Academic Program Subcommittee (Christopher Domin)**

Christopher reported on the subcommittee's recent activities:

**Process Improvements:** The committee has been streamlining meetings to manage presentations and discussions more efficiently while maintaining schedule. They're also working with Melanie on the new course system to address human interface problems, with updates expected by the following week. The committee identified readability issues with CourseDoc columns and is implementing a PDF solution. Alex is working on making notification emails more descriptive.

**December Meeting - Information Science Programs:** The meeting focused extensively on information science, reviewing:

- New major modifications
- Eight or nine disestablishments

Initial concern about high numbers of disestablishments was addressed through explanation of an ongoing reorganization to use faculty more efficiently and streamline courses for student interest, including beefing up cyber operations while disestablishing other programs. Michael McKisson (committee member) presented with two additional faculty members, which proved effective for answering detailed questions. The committee discussed why cyber operations belongs in information science. The proposals received unanimous committee support.

**Personal Brand and Money Management Minor:** This CALES proposal initially came to the November meeting with a motion to support with changes/updates. The committee

provided nine points to address. Darin Knapp returned with two CALES faculty members in December. Key concerns included:

- Focus on student-athletes and contracts/branding/money management
- Need for contract law component

The committee requested addition of a College of Law elective in Entertainment Law, which includes contract elements. Despite the course being 400-500 level (potentially limiting accessibility), the proposal received unanimous approval after addressing the nine points.

### **Curriculum and Policy Subcommittee (Allyson)**

Allyson reported on several policy updates in progress:

**Undergraduate Course Syllabus Policy:** The subcommittee has been working for several months on streamlining this policy to better support students, including potentially requiring instructors to post syllabi to Brightspace by a certain deadline within the semester (not currently required).

**Gen Ed Policy Updates:** The subcommittee is awaiting additional pieces of the Gen Ed policy update. The course substitution policy should arrive next week, hopefully proceeding to UGC afterward.

### **Full UGC Report (Joost)**

Joost briefly noted that programs and policies have been moving forward through Faculty Senate without significant speed bumps. The council awaits UCAAC's feedback on the second language policy to see how it feeds back into UGC processes.

### **Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda included three information science programs:

- New major in Cyber Operations (BS)
- Modification to Bachelor of Applied Science in Cyber Operations
- Modification to minor in Cyber Operations

Jeremy raised a question about access to documents in the agenda link. Christopher Domin explained the items were in a box folder restricted to program subcommittee members due to confidential discussions. Future materials will be provided as PDFs. The items also went to CourseDoc, which not all members can access yet.

Paul Wagner offered to answer detailed questions about the cyber programs. Key clarifications included:

- The proposed BS in Cyber Operations replaces the existing BAS in Cyber Operations Cyber Engineering emphasis
- The BAS is being renamed to Cyber Defense
- Three completely different program names will exist with different subplans
- Programs align with NSA designations (Security, Cyber AI, Cyber Defense)
- Different programs serve different student demographics and career paths
- Core foundational courses are shared, but programs diverge significantly
- Programs align with Department of Defense and National Cyber Workforce Framework work roles

Allison questioned whether major requirements differed significantly between BS and BAS programs, typically expecting more overlap in dual-degree programs (like BA/BS in Psychology). Paul confirmed they are quite different, and the renaming to Cyber Defense resolves naming confusion.

The consent agenda was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously.

## **Discussion Items**

### **Posthumous Degree and Compassionate Certificate of Achievement Policy**

Allyson presented updates to the posthumous degree and certificate policy. The change adds a new Compassionate Certificate of Achievement while maintaining existing posthumous degree and certificate options.

#### **Key Features:**

- For students facing extraordinary circumstances preventing return to coursework (terminal illness, severe disability)
- Requested through Dean of Students Office by student or family
- No minimum enrollment requirements—if enrolled at university and permanently unable to return, eligible
- University discretion on circumstances
- Numbers expected to be low (desirable outcome)

- Modeled after Michigan State's similar certificate

Alex noted that while posthumous requests are infrequent, several cases in recent years created the need for this compassionate option.

The motion to approve passed with 16 votes in favor, zero opposed, no abstentions.

### **Course Types Policy Update**

Allyson presented comprehensive changes to the course types policy, originally discussed across six meetings in spring 2024:

#### **Major Changes:**

- Consolidates existing policy into one location
- Adds new clinical course type (particularly for health sciences/medical courses)
- Adjusts definitions to apply to online learning (currently inadequate)
- Addresses experiential learning in labs and workshops
- Removes class size references for workshops and practicums (increases faculty flexibility)
- Changes technical U-Access terminology to more useful policy language
- Removes outdated modes of presentation
- Links contact hours to credit definitions policy rather than calling out by course type
- Generalizes course type categories to be less prescriptive

#### **Consultation Process:**

- College of Veterinary Medicine approved
- College of Medicine Tucson approved (had suggestions for clinical course type but consensus was to not over-describe in policy)
- No response from College of Medicine Phoenix, Pharmacy, or Law (had 1.5 years to respond)

Joost noted detailed discussion about studios, music classes, and rehearsals with very involved committee member input during the original review.

The motion to approve passed with 16 votes in favor, zero opposed, zero abstentions.

## **New Minor in Personal Brand and Money Management (KALES)**

Christopher reviewed the proposal history from December when it was moved with updates/suggestions. Nine concerns were addressed, particularly regarding contract law. The College of Law's Entertainment Law course was added as an elective option, though it is a 400-500 level course.

### **Original Concerns Included:**

- Rationale for creating the minor and target audience
- What makes core courses unique
- University academic integrity concerns regarding branding
- Potential involvement of U of A brand experts
- Maintaining relevance in rapidly changing technology
- Contract law component
- Balancing general student needs with apparent student-athlete focus

No changes were made to the proposal itself; only conversation occurred with law professors about the entertainment law course addition. The committee voted unanimously to approve at the December meeting.

Justine Schwantz, a former student-athlete on the committee, reportedly had no concerns about the proposal.

The motion to approve passed with 16 votes in favor (including Christopher's delayed vote), zero opposed, one abstention.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned approximately 10 minutes ahead of schedule, with Joost noting they were making up time from the technical difficulties at the beginning. The chair expressed optimism about staying ahead of schedule, particularly with academic progress subcommittee work.

### **Respectfully submitted**

Ryan Winet