

Minutes

University Academic Affairs Committee (Regular Meeting)

March 31, 2025 3:00pm

Online (Zoom)

In attendance:

Theresa Grana (CAS), Alex Honold (Secretary, COE), Jennifer Magee (CAS), Xin-Wen Wu (Chair, CAS)

Ex Officio: Melissa Yakabouski (Dean of Admissions & Associate Vice President); Wes Hilliard (Associate Provost for Academic Engagement and Student Success)

Other Attendees: Gary Richards (Professor of English & Linguistics)

1. Call to Order: 3:00
2. Meeting Minutes
 - a. Previously approved
3. Old Business
4. New Business
 - a. Discussion of Proposal to Update Major Declaration Credit Requirements. Details are in the Appendix.
 - i. Rationale: 1. open door earlier for students to get started on major pathway before end of freshman year. 2. Reduce FSEM advisor load in the spring, and 3. Allow advising to better isolate truly undecided students and provide them support and information 4. Students get expertise from department advisors earlier
 - ii. Proposed change will not impact gen ed requirements, so students will still get broad exposure to different subjects
 - iii. Proposed change also won't require students to declare earlier than they want to
 - iv. More and more students coming in with upwards of 20 to 30 credits already.
 - v. May help with recruiting by letting parents know their students can get started with the major early in freshman year
 - vi. Possibility that students might rush into something without exploring, but options still open and gen eds still in place
 - vii. Could also add to departmental advising loads, but advisors are likely better suited to students needs/interests.

- viii. Change may also help department chairs to better anticipate earlier how many students are coming in to the major.
 - ix. Could better focus students on realistic pathways earlier but doesn't stop a student from changing their mind and exploring.
 - x. Gives more flexibility to students without taking away traditional student experience.
 - xi. Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion (John Marsh cast his vote before the meeting)
5. Announcements:
- a. No meeting in April unless pressing business
6. Adjournment: 3:27

Appendix

PROPOSAL TO UPDATE MAJOR DECLARATION CREDIT REQUIREMENTS Submitted Spring 2025

Submitted by: Wes Hillyard, Deborah O'Dell, and Gary Richards

Current Policy:

A first time, first year B.A./B.S. student is eligible to declare a major or minor by submitting a major or minor declaration form through the [Office of the Registrar webpage](#) at the end of their first year or upon completion of 28 credits. Students with questions about majors/minors should contact or visit the appropriate academic department (or college). If you change your mind about the major and/or minor you originally selected, it is possible to change to a different major/minor simply by submitting a new form online.

Proposed New Language for the Catalog:

A first-time, first-year B.A./B.S. student is eligible to declare a major or minor by submitting a major or minor declaration form through the [Office of the Registrar webpage](#) following advanced registration during their first fall or spring semester.

A transfer student is eligible to declare a major or minor by submitting a major or minor declaration form through the [Office of the Registrar webpage](#) following their initial advising meeting in the Office of Academic Services or during a Transfer Student Orientation.

Students with questions about majors/minors should contact or visit the appropriate academic department or college. Students can change to a different major and/or minor after their initial declaration by submitting a new major change form online.

Students going into a major in Education or Business must adhere to additional requirements as specified by those degrees.

Rationale:

UMW's Academic Catalog currently states that students must have earned 28 credit hours prior to declaring their major. Removing this credit requirement would benefit students and advisors in numerous ways.

- This change would connect students who have determined their intended majors to those majors earlier in their academic careers.
- This change would particularly benefit students in majors with sequencing that begins in the first year, such as majors in the pre-health track. Students would now have advisors with greater expertise in these programs.
- This change would address a growing student population that often brings in significantly more credits than in the past. These students have already completed many General Education requirements and are ready to begin work in their majors immediately.
- This change would not impact most students' explorations of disciplines through their completion of the General Education program.
- The change would not require that a student declare a major at the end of the first semester; rather, this change would give flexibility to students in deciding when to declare a major.
- This change would benefit first-year advisors by reducing their advising loads, particularly in the second semester, and thus allow advisors to better serve those students who are still exploring majors.
- This change would not alter existing additional requirements for declaring majors in the College of Education and in the College of Business.

