

Ad Hoc Committee on Omnibus-numbered and X-listed Courses

Final Report to the Faculty Senate, June 2000

Chair:

David Holloway (ENG)

Members:

Sy Adler (Urban Studies & Planning);

Mary Ann Barham (IASC)

Joel Bluestone (Music)

Johanna Brenner (Women's Studies)

Scott Burns (Geology)

Candice Goucher (Black Studies)

Roy Koch (Civil Engineering)

Marjorie Terdal (Linguistics)

Ex Officio members:

Dick Pratt (Academic Affairs)

Kim Brown (International Affairs)

Consultants:

Cindy Baccar (DARS)

Linda Devereaux, (OAA)

Fran Fahey (Registration & Records)

Angela Garbarino, (Degree Req.)

Kathi Ketcheson (OIRP)

Cheryl Ramette (University Studies)

Robert Tufts (Registrar)

Introduction and Background

At the Senate meeting of 6 December, 1999, the University Curriculum Committee in its Annual Report expressed these concerns about cross-listed and omnibus courses:

The UCC is concerned about the number of cross-listed courses (i.e. identical course with different departmental prefixes) and the continuing use of omnibus numbers after multiple offerings of a course. This is of major concern respect to what is best for students in terms of clarity of selecting classes, identifying course offerings in the time schedule, and content of transcripts when courses are not listed in the BULLETIN. The specific concerns about this arise at present from the need for accurate tracking of courses for degree audit and advising, in particular for University Studies requirements and from the implementation of the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS). The UCC understands that work to identify all current cross-listed courses has already been conducted in OAA as part of the implementation of DARS.

The UCC then proposed and the Senate unanimously passed the following motion:

That the Faculty Senate charge the Steering Committee to form an ad hoc committee to analyze the merits and barriers of continued use of cross-listed courses and omnibus numbers, with specific attention to:

- What is best for assisting students to identify and register for courses?
- What is most helpful for faculty advising?
- What is the most beneficial for University Studies?
- *What will assist in allocation of credit hours?
- What produces the most useful transcript of courses taken?
- What are the implications for ... DARS and for Institutional Research?

This committee should report back to the Senate by the May Senate meeting with specific recommendations. (Senate *Minutes*, pp.3-4)

*The Committee will provide additional information on this point at the Senate meeting.

The Committee met February 17 and five times thereafter. At meetings, members and consultants provided statements describing problems and possible solutions in their respective areas. The committee members found initially that they held divergent opinions based on their individual experiences with crosslistings and omnibus-numbered courses. Final recommendations reflect a consensus of all members and consultants participating in the committee's discussions. However, after thorough discussion of the issues from their various perspectives, they decided to reframe the charge by separating the issues of crosslisting and omnibus-numbered courses (as indicated below).

CROSSLISTED COURSES

Historically, crosslisted classes have allowed departments to collaborate and produce curricular arrangements that benefit multiple programs, encourage interdisciplinarity, and thus serve diverse student needs. Crosslisting in and of itself is not inherently problematic. It may present a level of complexity for degree auditing and tracking of progress towards degree completion and may even require some additional effort as in adequately recording the appropriate distribution of SCH or reflecting the multiple program requirements possible. Crosslisting has been handled by Degree Audit Report System (DARS); its benefits to students have far outweighed the administrative challenges.

As members sought to preserve these advantages, they also sought to deal with difficulties that crosslisting nevertheless entails, especially as P.S.U. transcripts and degree audits will increasingly be computerized. Increasingly, because crosslisting creates multiple versions of one course, students, faculty and advisors cannot access essential information as readily as needed.

Because single-prefixed course can now be displayed under multiple headings in the Time Schedule, crosslisting is no longer necessary for purpose of advertising another department's courses. When this capability for multiple listings is fully operational for both traditional and WEB registration, all such crosslisting will become unnecessary.

Committee Recommendations For Crosslisting Policy at PSU:

1. Continue the current practice of crosslisting discrete numbered courses that represent agreed upon and permanent, parallel courses between two departments or programs. Make certain that the crosslisted relationship between the two discrete courses is clearly stated in course descriptions for both courses in the PSU *Bulletin*.

Example: PSY 342 "Social Psychology" (in Bulletin: "crosslisted with SOC 342")
SOC 342 "Social Psychology" (in Bulletin: "crosslisted with PSY 342")

2. Except as in #1 above, use a single departmental prefix for each course. It should be noted that Departments and Programs will need to review catalogue copy to assure descriptions of requirements allow appropriate courses which happen to bear another department's prefix. (EXAMPLE: See next page, recommendation #4.)

3. Continue the current practice of allowing crosslisting between 2 levels within one department. Example: ENG 420/520, HST 520/620.

OMNIBUS COURSES

Omnibus courses, however, present a different set of problems. Historically, omnibus courses were designed for the experimental offering of new courses on a trial basis. Current policy requires that a specific course under an omnibus number be offered only 3 times and no more unless it goes through the formal curriculum approval process. Nevertheless, the use of omnibus numbered courses has proliferated to include crosslisting with discreet numbered courses, as well as for what are essentially ongoing course offerings. These practices have negative consequences which include:

- obscure transcript listings of courses and hence difficulty in transferring courses
- unwieldy course lists University Studies must keep track of for Cluster listings,
- inability of DARS to apply courses appropriately for degrees,
- general lack of clarity for students and advisors for academic planning, and
- confusion in scheduling, tracking, and assessment of experimental courses

Committee Recommendations for Omnibus Numbered Courses—

4. Discontinue the current practice of crosslisting omnibus numbered courses either with discreet numbered courses or with other omnibus numbered courses.

- The present system for listing courses in the Time Schedule. Note: this one class generates **SEVEN** classlists requiring separate forms from **FOUR** departments.

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| <u>URBAN STUDIES & PLANNING</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| #63894 | USP | 457 | 001 | INFORMATION CITIES | M | 1245-1525 | NH59 | Sussman | |
| #63893 | USP | 557 | 001 | INFORMATION CITIES | M | 1245-1525 | NH59 | Sussman | |
| <u>POLITICAL SCIENCE</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| #63541 | PS | 410U | X01 | TOP:INFORMATN CITIES | M | 1245-1525 | NH59 | Sussman | |
| #62553 | PS | 510 | 002 | TOP:INFORMATN CITIES | M | 1245-1525 | NH59 | Sussman | |
| <u>SPEECH</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| #62734 | SP | 410U | X01 | UDC:INFORMATN CITY | M | 1245-1525 | NH59 | Sussman | |
| #62755 | SP | 510 | 002 | UDC:INFORMATN CITY | M | 1245-1525 | NH59 | Sussman | |
| <u>INTERNATIONAL STUDIES</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| #61130 | INTL | 410U | X01 | UDC:INFORMATN CITIES | M | 1245-1525 | NH59 | Sussman | |

- The recommended system for listing courses. Note that the one class generates only **TWO** classlists (Sr & Grad) requiring forms from only **ONE** department.

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| <u>URBAN STUDIES & PLANNING</u> | | | | | | | | | |
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5. Devise an implementation strategy for monitoring and enforcing the existing rule that limits the offering of a specific omnibus course to three times without going through the formal curriculum approval process.

(The Committee has discussed possible procedures for tracking and eventual approval of experimental omnibus courses and would be willing to make these suggestions available.)

6. Be certain computerized registration and scheduling programs adapt to PSU curricular needs — and not vice versa. In particular: revise the BANWEB program to allow web search engines to access multiple listings of single-prefixed courses.

(Example: A Womens' Studies major when searching for WS courses must retrieve not only WS-prefix courses, but other departments' courses approved for use in the Womens' Studies program)

CONCLUSION

It is the Committee's view that these six recommendations, when implemented, will

- Assist student in registering for classes by clarifying and simplifying course listings
- Help advisors by allowing more consistent display of and access to course information
- Simplify complex, duplicative listings of courses used for University Studies clusters
- * Clarify courses departmental affiliations for planning, budget, and record-keeping
- Facilitate computerized record keeping, degree audits, and transfer of courses by means of a clearer transcript record more consistently linked with course descriptions and requirements.

* Additional information on this point will be presented at the Senate meeting.