

Abilene Undergraduate Academic Council
September 20, 2023
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Adams Center Classroom

Present: K. Witemeyer, T. Baggs, R. Slaymaker, D. Mayhall, J. Drachenberg, R. Brown, J.D. Wallace, T. Womble, R. Jessup

Absent: T. Sensing

Ex-officios: E. Gumm, J. Smith, J. Wiser, C. Riley (B. Reeves was absent)

Guests: T. Head, S. Jones, C. Miertschin, S. Hamm

The meeting began at 3:30 p.m.

1. Call to order by T. Baggs.
2. Prayer by D. Mayhall.
3. Approval of the minutes from 5.3.23

Motion to approve minutes by D. Mayhall; second by J. Wallace; all in favor; motion approved.

Action Items

4. New Approval Chart for Curriculum Change

J. Smith - Two big changes. As we have shifted into a university system with two campuses, we had to decide what decisions needed to be made at what level. We are proposing a structure that breaks things into categories for changes to courses or programs that already exist and those that propose new additions. Changes to existing courses or programs can be made at the campus level. If the change is something new or something that affects the entire system, then we would like approval at the university level.

There are behind-the-scenes functions that we wished to operationalize. We want to make sure that changes to cross-listed courses are signed by both campuses. This is to aid communication between campuses and make sure that everyone is on the same page.

J. Wallace - Are they signing that they have seen it or that they approve? J. Smith - Yes, they are signing that they have been notified. R. Slaymaker - So this is different than a support memo, correct? J. Smith - Yes. We wanted a signature to ensure that

communication is happening. Especially at the general education level. It's easier to see that on the approval chart than in a separate attachment.

J. Wallace - It seems that if they are signing an approval chart, they are actually approving and not just being notified.

Motion to approve by T. Womble; seconded by R. Jessup; 6 in favor; 1 abstention; motion passes.

5. Civil Engineering – New Program

R. Brown - This is something that has been brewing for a while. We have a general engineering degree with four tracks. Unfortunately, our industrial faculty have left, so that concentration is defunct at the moment. We would like to move forward in creating these as majors instead of just tracks. It will help attract students to ACU and will help graduates with their career goals. These are the most popular programs among prospective students.

J. Wallace - It seems like there is slow growth in engineering and a saturated market. R. Brown - The prospects in Texas are a bit better than across the nation. Even with a somewhat saturated market, we are giving our students a leg up in the marketplace with these new programs. T. Head - Higher ed is hitting an enrollment cliff where few people are seeking college degrees, but that is not the case with engineering. J. Wiser - Texas is one of three states projected to have more college age students in 2034 than 2024, and the vast majority remain in Texas for schooling.

R. Brown - The core courses are the same as our current degree. We plan to tweak some of the courses. In Math/Science, we are changing the menus. This is to address ABET accreditation. We are looking to add specific courses that address specific engineering specialties. We are keeping the basic degree plan very similar between programs in the early stages so that students can change from one to the other fairly easily.

E. Gumm - The two lab courses you propose, are these free-standing labs or connected to a lecture course? R. Brown - I believe they are free-standing. ABET prescribes more lab hours for civil engineering. E. Gumm - I would suggest some wording changes, such as "electives" within a concentration area - I would recommend "selection" instead.

R. Brown - We originally chose the BSE to make it clear which programs are ABET accredited, but moving forward, the distinction breaks down. It makes it difficult for students to double major. Making these BS degrees instead of BSE will make that easier for students. Looking at other institutions, it's split. It leans more toward the BS, however.

R. Brown - We are increasing the number of times we offer some courses, that plus the new courses is why we are needing new faculty. T. Womble - Do you think you can hire enough to get these done? R. Brown - We look to hire 3 new faculty positions by 2024 to feel good about this new direction. We will then add more faculty later as the need

arises. Getting this through council will allow us to advertise positions and help with hiring. R. Slaymaker - What's the solution for mathematics not having capacity? R. Brown - That is part of the finance picture, so adding math faculty is in the works as well. T. Womble - Do you think it will be hard to hire faculty? R. Brown - It will be difficult, but we have an ability to reach a broad audience. T. Head - We do have some leads, and we haven't posted anything yet.

E. Gumm - What is the plan for the current program? R. Brown - This depends on what our students do. We expect students to move to the new programs in about 3 years. We might keep the general engineering program as a fallback plan. I imagine it will house very few students, but we like the idea of keeping it on the books for now. T. Head - While a lot of students want the specific program, there are those who like the breadth that is offered in the general BSE.

6. Electrical Engineering – New Program

See above.

7. Mechanical Engineering – New Program

See above.

Motion to approve items 5-7 by J. Wallace; seconded by J. Drachenberg; all in favor; motion passes.

Meeting ended at 4:09 p.m.

Addendum - On 6/12/24 it was discovered that council viewed an older proposal for Mechanical Engineering that called for a 129-131 hour program. That had been revised by the college council to remove one upper-level general engineering selection to bring the total hours down to 128, but the revised version did not get passed on to AUAC. The revised version was implemented in the catalog for 2024-25 after it was determined by Dr. Baggs that the intent of the council was to approve the program as designed by the department. The proposal documentation was updated for the permanent record.