

Abilene Undergraduate Academic Council
April 1, 2026
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Adams Center Classroom

Present: W. Crawford, K. Witemeyer, S. Talley, R. Ashlock, R. Brown, T. Baggs, T. Sensing, R. Fowler

Absent: B. Burton

Ex-officios: K. Williams, C. Riley, M. McCallon, Eric Gumm (J. Camp was absent)

Guests: S. Jones, J. Ehrke, L. Sharp-Penya, T. Kennedy, J. Smith, K. Lee, K. Theledi

The meeting began at 3:30 p.m.

1. Call to order by W. Crawford.
2. Prayer by T. Kennedy.
3. Approval of the minutes from 3.18.26

Motion to approve minutes by R. Brown; seconded by R. Fowler; all in favor; motion passes.

Information Items

4. COMM 241 – Change Description
5. COMM 322, 483, 499 – Change Course Terms
6. COMM 415 – Change Title
7. COMM 450 – Change Title
8. COMM 492 – Change Title
9. ENGR 116 – Change Title
10. ENGR 117 – Change Title and Description

Action Items

11. COMM 136 – Change Credit Hours to Variable (0-1), Update Description

L. Sharp-Penya - This course is the debate workshop. This is not a required course. Students on the debate team take this credit. Most students don't take the course because they don't want it to pay the tuition. So we would like to give them the option to

take it for zero credit. W. Crawford - How does this affect load? L. Sharp-Penya - The teacher is covered by being the debate coach. D. Kennamer - This will capture a more accurate picture of what she does, since she is doing all the work and the students are doing the work, but it is not captured anywhere since they are not enrolled in a course. L. Sharp-Penya - It is similar to what is happening in Choir, for example. W. Crawford - We want to avoid zero credit courses that lead to faculty not being compensated for the hours they teach. L. Sharp-Penya - This is only for the debate team, and it will not go beyond that.

Motion to approve by R. Ashlock; seconded by S. Talley; all in favor; motion passes.

12. COMM 315 – New Course – Human Connection in Social Media

K. Theledi - We want to give students a deeper understanding on the effect of social media on human communication and relationships. R. Brown - Is this a lecture/lab? L. Sharp-Penya - It should be just lecture. R. Ashlock - The #4 learning outcome, “to frame” is perhaps not the best verb for measuring. Design or propose might be a better verb when it comes to measuring. W. Crawford - That would help with assessment. K. Theledi - Design would work. T. Sensing - The assignments are not on the syllabus? They are only on Canvas? S. Talley - They are listed but the instructions are covered in Canvas. R. Ashlock - Yes, that is standard. We don't want the syllabi to become unwieldy.

Motion to approve by S. Talley; seconded by R. Brown; all in favor; motion passes.

13. COMM 463 – New Course – Nonprofit Communication and Management

L. Sharp-Penya - This will be focused on the communication that happens in nonprofits and how they are managed. They will look at drafting grant applications and communicating with Boards. There will be a graduate version of this course as well. It is being taught right now as a special topics class. There is a service component. Students are working with the Abilene Zoo. She has received very positive feedback and has been asked to return next year. This focuses on qualitative research. They look at volunteerism and how to enable the volunteers to have a good experience. W. Crawford - Is the AI policy a departmental guideline? R. Ashlock - I believe these are from the Adams Center.

Motion to approve by R. Brown; seconded by S. Talley; all in favor; motion passes

14. COMM 493 – New Course – Rhetoric of Social Movements

K. Theledi - In this class, we are analyzing rhetorical tactics of social movements. We want to be broad in how we define social movements. We want to give students an understanding of how change happens in society. R. Fowler - We wanted to build in

some flexibility built into the course so that multiple faculty members can teach it with a diversity of approaches and topics. S. Talley - I think that is smart. K. Theledi - We might want to open this to grad students in the future. K. Williams - I don't see the Title IX policy on either of these syllabi. I believe that is required. R. Ashlock - That won't impact our vote at all, but it does need to be included on the syllabi. S. Talley - I see it in there with a link to the policy.

Motion to approve by R. Ashlock; seconded by R. Brown; 1 abstention; 5 in favor; motion passes

15. COMS Minor – Add COMM 315, 463, 493

L. Sharp-Penya - This is just adding the new courses as options in the minor.

Motion to approve by R. Brown; seconded by S. Talley; all in favor; motion passes.

16. BA COMS – Add COMM 430 to Communication Core, Revise Tracks

L. Sharp-Penya - We are reflecting the name changes and adding the new courses to some of the tracks and restructuring the core. We are also changing the name of one of the tracks. K. Witemeyer - We will need to change the concentration code. L. Sharp-Penya - If COSS is available, that would fit our pattern.

17. BS COMS – Add COMM 430 to Communication Core, Revise Tracks

See above.

Motion to approve items 16 & 17 by T. Bagg; seconded by S. Talley; all in favor; motion passes.

18. SOCI 445 – New Course – Sports and Society

L. Sharp-Penya - This is addressing a gap in the curriculum. We have a minor that is used often in Liberal Studies. We have many athletes in those programs. She wanted to create a course that would be of interest to this population. We are teaching it as a special topics course now, and the student athletes are really enjoying it. W. Crawford - With her being the only faculty member, is this good with load? L. Sharp-Penya - Yes, it will only be offered every other year. R. Ashlock - Her assignments are going to be difficult to ensure they are not AI-generated. W. Crawford - We are working on a university policy for AI.

Motion to approve by R. Brown; seconded by S. Talley; all in favor; motion passes.

19. SOCI 477 – Reopen Course

L. Sharp-Penya - This course was mistakenly closed when we closed a large number of SOCI courses. D. Kennamer - It was not in any programs, so it closed immediately. Our faculty member would really like to teach it, though.

Motion to approve by R. Brown; seconded by T. Baggs; all in favor; motion passes.

20. SOCI Minor – Add SOCI 445 & Restore SOCI 477

L. Sharp-Penya - We are just adding the new items back to the minor.

Motion to approve by S. Talley; seconded by R. Brown; all in favor; motion passes.

21. PLAW 301 – Change Number to PLAW 210, Reduce Hours from 2 to 1

C. Riley - We want to change this number to signal to students that it is designed to be taken their sophomore year.

22. PLAW 410 – New Course – Legal Studies Launch

C. Riley - This is designed to serve seniors as they complete. R. Brown - Looking at the learning outcome of preparing them for law school - “prepare” is difficult to assess. C.

Riley - Yes. I would be open to ideas for improving that. R. Brown - Maybe just use the assessment as the outcome. R. Ashlock - It does meet the requirement. Perhaps “create” or “design” would be better.

23. Legal Studies Minor – Revise & Expand Menus

C. Riley - Over the past four years, we have grown the Legal Studies minor to 50 students. We want to refine. We are adding several new courses as well to expand our menus.

Motion to approve items 21-23 with a note to change “prepare” to “create” in learning outcome #4 by R. Brown; seconded by R. Ashlock; all in favor; motion passes.

24. SDS 387 – New Course – Data Visualization in R and Python

J. Ehrke - This is the cornerstone of the new SDS program. We expect this to have some heavy interest campus-wide as an elective. K. Williams - Is there overarching

terminology that can be used to keep it evergreen? J. Ehrke - The course name is accurate because the program languages will hold true. R. Ashlock - Learning outcome #3 - the word “master” is troublesome. S. Talley - All the “introduce” is a problem. The instructor is doing that. What is the student doing? J. Ehrke - Master can change to “implement.” Cleaning and Wrangling are the words of the field. S. Talley - Apply or demonstrate. Some clarity would be helpful.

Motion to approve with change of “master” to “implement” in learning outcome #3 by S. Talley; seconded by R. Brown; all in favor; motion passes.

25. SDS 396 – New Course – Statistics and Data Science Seminar

J. Ehrke - This one goes along with 496. We have a MATH 397 and 497. We felt that these weren't quite right for the SDS students. So we created versions of those for SDS. The MATH and SDS courses will be taught together at the same time with the same instructor. The assignments will be tailored to the individual students. If the program grows, we will separate them. But this way, we keep from overloading the faculty. This course focuses on research. The senior course focuses on capstone. R. Ashlock - "Strengthen" is problematic. W. Crawford - I think we can borrow language from the assessment. Develop progressive skills.

Motion to approve with change of "strengthen" to "develop progressive skills" by S. Talley; seconded by R. Brown; all in favor; motion passes.

26. SDS 475 – New Course – Sports Analytics

J. Ehrke - This is a personal hobbyist area for me and we get a lot of students asking about it. We have alumni working with MLB teams that could be utilized as guest lecturers. We can work with ACU athletics for projects. It fits best with spring teams, so we plan to put it in the spring. My one concern is that there is a course of a similar title on the graduate side. Is that a problem? E. Gumm - It shouldn't be. You might look at the other course material. J. Ehrke - From what I can tell, the courses are very different. R. Brown - Your first learning outcome is "reinforce." Maybe "apply" would be better.

Motion to approve with change of "reinforce" to "apply" in learning outcome #1 by R. Ashlock; seconded by R. Fowler; all in favor; motion passes.

27. SDS 479 – New Course – Multivariate Analysis

J. Ehrke - This expands typical statistics that look at one variable to predict across multiple variables. It becomes much more complicated. We look at machine learning.

Motion to approve by R. Brown; seconded by R. Fowler; all in favor; motion passes.

28. SDS 483 – Biostatistics

J. Ehrke - We plan to have three concentrations within the new program. One is in biosciences. The biostatistics course has not been taught in quite some time. It actually looks better to have this taught in the Math Department on med school applications. The Biology Department agreed to crosslist it with us. This course will deal with big data. The way you handle statistics with big data is different than with other data sets. S. Talley - I like that it helps our students going to med school. J. Ehrke - We've also looked at tailoring the prerequisites to make it more accessible to biology students.

29. BIOL 483 – Crosslist with SDS 483

See above.

Motion to approve items 28 & 29 by R. Ashlock; seconded by S. Talley; all in favor; motion passes.

30.SDS 496 – New Course – Statistics and Data Science Capstone

See #25 above. J. Ehrke - The data science will have a different capstone project than the math students. They will have consultation experiences.

Motion to approve by S. Talley; seconded by R. Brown; all in favor; motion passes.

31. New Minor – Statistics and Data Science

J. Ehrke - We are designing a new major as well. The name might be changing from Statistics and Data Science to Data Science and Statistics. It is really hard to keep the syllabi up-to-date because things change so quickly. W. Crawford - There is no pushback against this program, but there are now other people from marketing, admissions, etc. who are weighing in. Data Science is a growing field and would be easier for students to find. However, it needs to be standard for the field. J. Ehrke - Data Science is really a master's level program. The two undergrad programs at other universities are called Statistics and Data Science. We really don't even touch Data Science until upper-level. I think it is a really good thing to have a focus on statistics. R. Ashlock - Do you have the faculty to teach these? J. Ehrke - We have two already and we are looking to hire a third. Most of the courses are every-other year, so we can do it with only two faculty if need be.

We expect this to be very popular. We will also be pushing certifications for our students. This will help prepare students for graduate school. Students will need MATH 377 instead of MATH 123 as the entry point. Coming out with machine learning knowledge will benefit our students. We will also encourage students to do a math internship which will help them professionally.

Motion to approve by R. Brown; seconded by R. Ashlock; all in favor; motion passes.

32. ENGR 115 – Change to 2 Credit Hours; Revise Title, Description, and Content

T. Kennedy - The content is increasing, so we want to expand this to reflect the number of hours students attend class.

33. ENGR 306 – Add Junior Standing Restriction, Remove Prerequisite, Change Course Terms

T. Kennedy - We are offering it more often to allow for smaller sections to aid discussion. Adding a junior standing restriction.

34. All Engineering Programs – Remove ENGR 317, Increase Hours for ENGR 115

T. Kennedy - We are making changes to reflect the new hours and the content from 317 is covered in a different course.

Motion to approve items 32-34 by R. Ashlock; seconded by T. Baggs; all in favor; motion passes.

35. CMGT 215 – New Course – Plans and Estimation

T. Kennedy - The accreditation body is very specific about what we need to cover. These courses are going to be exactly what the titles suggest. This course covers taking all the information to make an accurate construction bid.

Motion to approve by R. Fowler; seconded by R. Ashlock; all in favor; motion passes.

36. CMGT 315 – New Course – Advanced Estimating

T. Kennedy - This is the follow-up course to 215. They will learn to use software common in the industry.

Motion to approve by T. Baggs; seconded by R. Fowler; all in favor; motion passes.

37. CMGT 344 – New Course – Virtual Design and Construction

T. Kennedy - This is where you look at 5D - 3D plus cost and people. Looking at virtual walk-throughs. K. Williams - Is there a course fee? T. Kennedy - Yes, for the software cost.

Motion to approve by R. Ashlock; seconded by R. Fowler; all in favor; motion passes.

38. Construction Management (CMGT) – New Program

T. Kennedy - We tackle many of the other aspects in civil engineering courses and design courses. We have many employers looking for students with this background. We also have students interested in this. It's a cross between engineering and business. Students will walk out the door with a job market ready for them. We have a few more new courses still in the works. W. Crawford - It's a growing field.

Motion to approve by T. Baggs; seconded by T. Sensing; all in favor; motion passes.

Meeting ended at 5:20 p.m.