



Undergraduate Council Handbook 3/21/2025

Introduction:

This handbook serves to improve leadership transitions by providing additional information on the Undergraduate Council's composition, its current expectations, and its previous work. This Handbook will first provide detailed explanations of all roles of everyone involved as well as current expectations and initiatives. Lastly, the handbook will explain previous work starting from fall 2022.

Vice Provost for Curriculum and Strategic Initiatives (VPCSI)

Dr. Jorge Figueroa is the VPCSI. He leads and directs Curriculum and Academic Partnership

functions for the University in support of the strategic mission. Provides leadership for curriculum development, academic program development, undergraduate education, core curriculum, transfer agreements, and university scheduling. Oversees first-year student seminar instruction, university curriculum committee, the university course inventory, compliance with state and university policies for undergraduate education, and facilitates academic partnerships that support the university's strategic mission.

Administers the Undergraduate Council, including designation of members, administrative support for meetings, attending meetings with officers, the council, and its committees, as well as development of policies related to undergraduate education. The VPCSI is a ex-officio member of the Undergraduate Council including the Executive Committee.

Provided by Dr. Jorge Figueroa, Feb. 2025.

Undergraduate Chair:

It is recommended that the Undergraduate Chair develops an initiative or theme for the academic year before the start of the academic year. This can be workshopped with Dr. Jorge Figueroa, Vice Provost for Curriculum and Strategic Initiatives. See "Previous Work" as a source of inspiration. Make sure to have an initiative with actionable items. It is easy to fall into the trap where initiatives become data collection efforts that do not produce tangible results. The Undergraduate Council uses Robert's Rules of Order. Be sure to study how to approve minutes, adjourn, and call for a vote on recommending approval of new programs. The Chair does not vote on recommending the approval of a new program. Since 2022, the VPCSI, Chair, and Vice Chair meet a week before Executive Council to address updates, ongoing projects, plan future events, act on concerns, etc. The Executive Council meeting allows for the VPCSI, Chair, and Vice Chair to check-in with the Chairs of Course Proposal Committee, Program Review Committee, Assessment Committee, and Academic Policy Advisory Committee.

Vice Chair:

The Vice Chair supports and may step in to lead Undergraduate Council when the Chair is unable to join. The Vice Chair may pursue projects that complement the Chair's initiative.



The Vice Chair attends all three-monthly meetings: Meeting of Chairs, Executive Council, and Undergraduate Council.

See the bylaws for the descriptions of responsibilities for the rest of Executive Council. Below are some tips on how to lead the following sub-committees.

Program Review Committee Chair:

The purpose of the Program Review Subcommittee is to read, evaluate, and make recommendations on changes made to existing undergraduate degree programs. The committee discusses potential changes to the program and can raise questions about the programming on behalf of the full undergraduate council. Members of the subcommittee assess the program's current performance, outcomes, and alignment with degree objectives. The subcommittee also ensures the changes meet established university policy and state standards. After review, the subcommittee reports to the full undergraduate council their findings and makes recommendations for approval or denial of the program change.

The subcommittee uses the following questions to help review and guide the decision-making process:

- Is the rationale for the program appropriate?
- Are there other programs nearby that may offer something similar that might take issue?
- Does the program foster and assess student learning?
- Does the proposal mention career opportunities?
- Do the hours add up for an appropriate degree program?
- How will this impact potential student enrollment, and will the program meet the students where they are?
- Does the college/school have appropriate funding, instructional materials, and equipment to support the program?
- What sort of instructional delivery (modalities and locations) will the program use to engage with students? (i.e., technology, online learning, etc...)
- Does the program align with university mission, vision, and objectives?

Provided by Dr. Jerry Burkett, Chair, 2023-present.

Course Proposal Review Chair: The course proposal review committee examines newly developed or revised courses that are being presented to fulfill the requirements of core curriculum and/or one of three specialty areas: global perspectives, wellness, and women's/multicultural studies. It is recommended to survey committee members at the start of the academic year for interest/expertise in one of the three specialty areas to create subcommittees. Although the committee may not have courses to review in a given month, it is advised to have a standing monthly meeting of 30-60 minutes for the full committee to meet and discuss the proposal(s) prior to the Undergraduate Executive Committee meeting and full Undergraduate Council meeting. The Chair is responsible for returning any feedback from the course proposal review committee to the faculty member(s) proposing



the course(s) and maintaining that line of communication until the committee has come to a consensus on its recommendation for approval.

Provided by Dr. Joy Spadachene, Chair 2024-2025

Academic Policy Advisory Chair: The Academic Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) is primarily responsible for reviewing and making recommendations regarding existing and proposed academic policies that impact undergraduate education. It is also responsible for reviewing potential changes to the Undergraduate Council bylaws. It is an advisory committee only, and is not charged with proposing new policies or bylaws (although it may choose to do so if it decides this is warranted).

In my experience, the APAC receives proposed policies or changes when they have been submitted for review to the Undergraduate Council chair or to the Vice Provost for Curriculum and Strategic Initiative.

The APAC then reviews the policies as a subcommittee first, and it may ask questions to the responsible parties, request more information, do its own research, suggest changes to wording, or other changes. The APAC is then charged with summarizing and presenting the policies or changes to existing policy to the Undergraduate Council for a vote, according to procedure. The APAC may answer questions the general council poses, or it may ask the responsible parties to answer questions (if present). New policies and policy changes are presented to the general council for a first reading, and then may be voted upon by the Council as a whole at the following meeting.

(Additional Note: The Academic Policy Advisory Committee is oriented to academic policies that will appear in the TWU Catalog only, not just any policy that any undergraduate program decides to adopt.)

As head of this committee, I guided the committee through the approval process for some minor revisions to the Undergraduate Council Bylaws, some changes to the Minor Requirements in the catalog, and the adoption of the CPL (Credit for Prior Learning) policy, in the manner described above.

Provided by Dr. Matthew Brown, Chair 2023-2025

Assessment Committee Chair: In the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years, the committee focused on the goals highlighted in the bylaws. Using core assessment data provided by Academic Assessment, the committee created materials for increasing retention through advising, and workshops to build awareness of pedagogical techniques that improve equity gaps for TWU students and help faculty integrate course design features that meet the needs of TWU students. Our committee discussed a variety of options for the purpose of this committee moving forward, including:

- Reviewing AIIIs and AIIPs
- Seeking/Encouraging connections to the university's mission for undergraduate courses and programs



- Becoming a Retention Committee
- Becoming a “special topics” task force
- Becoming an Outcomes Committee

As retention is a kind of outcome, the last two options were the most appealing to the committee. We also discussed dismantling the committee altogether.

We identified the primary point of ambiguity in the committee as it currently operates is - unlike other UG Council committees - the assessment committee must come up with its own task every year. As committee members rotate frequently, institutional memory is lost and consistency is lacking. In considering new manifestations of the assessment committee, resolving this issue was the primary focus.

Option 1: As a “special topics” committee, the committee could work to address pressing or emergent issues. Its work could align with or compliment work going on in other parts of the university. However, it would receive its mission and goal from the Executive Committee each year. For example, the committee might be tasked with assisting the Provost’s work to strengthen the core, connecting these changes to the overall undergraduate mission.

Option 2: As an Outcomes committee, the committee would broaden its purview, focusing on the current mission to “utilize research and best practices to recommend appropriate modifications.” The committee’s work would be driven by leads from the Executive Committee, Academic Assessment, IRDM, or other institutional partners approved by the Executive Committee. After receiving retention/success/outcomes data at the beginning of the year, the committee would explore identified trends in the quantitative data by seeking qualitative data (interviews, focus groups, class visits, etc.) to identify best practices related to pedagogy and/or the undergraduate curriculum more broadly. The committee would then disseminate information and best practices to undergraduate faculty, through mediums including the CSI newsletter and/or workshops. Each cycle would take one to two years, but new leads would be welcomed each fall when institutional partners complete end-of-year reports. Because the committee’s work would be aligned with institutional data, it would be possible to track improvement over time.

Example: The committee previously did this style of work. The committee examined assessment data for equity issues, identified professors who were achieving equity in their assessment outcomes, interviewed those professors in a focus group, developed some best practices and held a workshop.

The bylaws would be a small shift to include the suggested language:

This committee is responsible for exploring data related to core curriculum, graduation requirements, and student success initiatives, providing critical information and feedback to administrative departments and academic component areas, with a goal of impacting overall student learning success.



Provided by Aubri Thurmond, Chair 2024-2025

Notable Challenges and Some Parting Advice:

Transparency was an issue that came up fall 2023-spr2024. The introduction of the CIM system allowed us to include all members of UGC in the review process as readers. Program Review Committee decides to bring to council or not, but UGC can see the events unfold.

Attendance. Keep track of no-shows. This was an issue 2024-2025. Ideally, reach out after first UGC meeting in September if there were members missing and no advanced email. The bylaws provide the support to take action. This can have serious implications to quorum and our ability to approve new courses and programs.

Participation in the sub-committees and UGC meetings. Program Review Committee must meet regularly to approve programs. This has the potential of slowing program approval down which is very serious. Make sure to coordinate with the chair to have meetings with the sub-committee before every Exec Council Meeting.

Lack of interest in Assessment Committee, Academic Policy Advisory Committee. Both committees do not have clear scheduled work. It is up to them to find work. Morale typically sinks by the spring semester as both end up on information fishing expeditions.

Parting Advice from the Chair: Change the Assessment Committee to support UGC's main purpose which is to approve new UG programs. We assess through holistic means, from the perspective of faculty. My thoughts are interprofessional education, service learning, experiential learning, are notions and practices that would serve this committee well. Expand the awards to include high-performing undergraduate programs as well as known instructors (adjuncts?) that are innovators. During the UGC meetings, stick to the schedule and try to finish on time or early. Faculty appreciate that. This is especially important when monitoring the time during presentations. During your first month as Chair, ask for access to last year's google drive so that you can see previous agendas. It's a great way to anticipate your first meeting. Take notes during both meetings before UGC. During said meetings, send that email, complete that task, if it only takes a minute or so (rather than wait till after). This also became an issue with UGC meetings. It is a good idea to add within EXEC Council Meetings to do an attendance check within the subcommittees and undergrad council meetings.

Typical Calendar of UGC Meetings:

August-April:

1. VPCSI, Chair, and Vice Chair meet **first week of the month**. They may meet in early August to establish the theme and objectives for academic year.
2. The following week Executive Council meets on **Wednesday at 2pm**.
3. The **forth Wednesday** of the month Undergraduate Council meets (typically at 2:30pm). **Double check your teaching schedule and faculty meetings.**



UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Previous Initiative Themes:

Communicative Excellence

Belonging 2022-23

Retention 2023-24

Advocacy 2024-25

Previous Initiative Actionable Items:

Instructor-focused Workshop on Utilizing Inclusive Language in Syllabi. The focus was on high-enrolled 1st year and 2nd year lower-division coursework. The goal was to help with retention. Participants brought syllabi with them, shared 2 weeks prior with Drs. Ashley Bender and Aimée Myers. This workshop continued for 3 years and grew in size as those involved got a good handle on it.

Revised Bylaws: This was led by Dr. Matthew Brown in Academic Policy Advisory Committee.

Regular Presentations from Experts: Dr. Figueroa (VPCSI) helps with this. Very important. I recommend moving assessment to this role. So, have Dr. Gray Scott introduce assessment changes via presentation with Q and A at the end.

UGC Awards: Started spring 2025. Includes Service Award and Innovative Programming Award.

This handbook! Please add on or delete paragraphs that you feel will not serve the next transition of leadership in Undergraduate Council.

Important Emails:

Jorge Figueroa (VPCSI): jfigueroa2@twu.edu

Michele Garcia (works with Jorge, helps build agendas, keeps track of quorum and voting, scheduling, always cc her) mgarcia96@twu.edu

William R. Benner, Chair and author of this handbook, wbenner@twu.edu



UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Sample Agendas:

**Texas Woman's University
Undergraduate Council
Executive Committee**

Academic Year Theme: Advocacy

March 19th, 2 pm

Zoom: <https://twu-edu.zoom.us/j/81316237179>

Members: Dr. Jorge F. Figueroa (ex-officio), Dr. William Benner, Dr. Aimee Myers, Dr. Joy Spadachene, Dr. Matt Brown, Dr. Jerry Burkett, Ms. Aubri Thurmond

Guests: Mr. Terrell Shaw, Mr. Scott Martin, Ms. Michele García

AGENDA

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|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| I. | Opening Remarks | Dr. Jorge F. Figueroa |
| II. | Update on faculty and program awards | Dr. William Benner |
| III. | Update on UG handbook | Dr. William Benner |
| IV. | Update on General Education Advisory Council | Dr. Aimee Myers |
| V. | Update- Spring Workshop
Developing a Well-Rounded Syllabi | Dr. Aimee Myers |
| VI. | Updates-UG Council Subcommittees | Sub-Committee Chairs |
| | a. Academic Policy Advisory | Dr. Matt Brown |
| | b. Assessment | Ms. Aubri Thurmond |
| | c. Course Proposal Review | Dr. Joy Spadachene |
| | d. Program Review | Dr. Jerry Burkett |
| VII. | Other Updates | As necessary |
| VIII. | Adjourn | |



UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Texas Woman's University Undergraduate Council Academic Year Theme: Advocacy

March 26th, 2:30 PM-4:00 PM

Zoom Link: <https://twu-edu.zoom.us/j/81385114895>

Google Folder

AGENDA

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| I. | Welcome | Dr. Jorge F. Figueroa, VP-CSI |
| II. | Opening Remarks and Quorum check | Dr. William Benner |
| III. | Review and Motion for approval of 2/26 meeting minutes | Dr. William Benner |
| IV. | Introduction to Guest speakers | Dr. William Benner |
| | a. First-Year Experience | Dr. Shanda Smith and
Dr. Jackie Hoermann-Elliott,
Co-Directors |
| | b. Undergraduate Admissions | Dr. Javier Flores, VP of
Enrollment Management |
| V. | Undergraduate Council Handbook | Dr. William Benner |
| VI. | General Education Advisory Council Update | Dr. Aimee Myers |
| VII. | Creating a Well-Rounded Syllabus Workshop Update | Dr. Aimee Myers |
| | a. Registration deadline is March 30. | |
| | b. The workshop date is April 15 th | |
| VIII. | UG Council sub-committees update | Dr. William Benner |
| | a. Academic Policy Advisory | Dr. Matt Brown |
| | b. Assessment | Ms. Aubri Thurmond |
| | i. Backwards Design Workshop update | |
| | c. Course Proposal Review | Dr. Joy Spadachene |
| | i. English 1013 | |
| | d. Program Review | Dr. Jerry Burkett |
| | i. B.S. in Family Studies (Mental Health Emphasis) | |
| | ii. B.S. in Computer Science (Cybersecurity) | |
| IX. | CSI Updates | Dr. Jorge F. Figueroa and CSI team |
| X. | New Business | Dr. William Benner |
| | a. Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair for the 2025-2026 Undergraduate Council | |
| XI. | Next UG Council meeting: 4/23/2025 | |
| XII. | Adjourn | |