

**CLAS Faculty Council Meeting**  
**In-Person and Zoom**  
**Thursday, September 11, 2025**  
**9:00AM -10:30 AM**

**MINUTES**

**Attending:** Michael Abeyta, Mia Fischer, Nick Fisk, Jeffrey Golub, Rodney Herring, Lorna Hutchison, Pam Jansma, Katharine Kelsey, Lisa Keränen, Scott Reed, Chad Shomura, Dale Stahl, Masoud Asadi-Zeydabadi

**Guests:** Keith Guzik, Julien Langou, Alyssa Martoccio, Victor I-Hao Woo

**Recording:** Karen Fennell

**Welcome and Introductions:** Kathy Kelsey

- Kathy welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the year and suggested participants introduce themselves.
- Kathy is the Interim Chair while Margaret Woodhull is on Sabbatical.

**Approval of Minutes for May 2025 meeting**

- Motion to approve the Minutes, seconded.
- Minutes approved by majority vote with no changes.

**Dean's Office Updates:** Pam Jansma

- Chancellor's Forum September 16. The Chancellor is expected to outline his vision for the campus in-person. Everyone is encouraged to attend.
- The theme this year is student success; retention, removing barriers and being flexible in how we deliver our curricula and what we might do to reach new markets. This could potentially be a lot of work but there's a lot of opportunity for CLAS in this space.
- We have heard there are potentially no budget cuts this year. The state legislature did claw back some funds, but the impact to us is only a few hundred thousand and so that's going to be covered with one-time funds this year. Next year is a period of uncertainty, so we'll have to see what happens next year.

**Overview of Revisions to CLAS Graduation Requirements:** Lisa Keränen

- We don't have a formal proposal yet for changing the CLAS graduation requirements. The purpose today is to share some history about how the Liberal Arts and Sciences curriculum has changed over time and what the review committee is doing next.
- Our industry is under pressure with recent political changes around learning and higher education. This creates a very challenging environment for how to figure out a path forward for our society and maintain our viability as a university.
- All units have been asked across campus to participate in what Central Administration has called program viability. What has gotten lost in this is the curricular innovation piece that was at the core of what the faculty working group actually wanted us to be doing.

- In CLAS we want to talk about our vitality and how we make all of our disciplines, from the humanities to physics and natural sciences individually, and the college collectively, as vital, lively and dynamic as possible. We need to figure out the balance and connection between the parts of this bigger system.
- The topics today are the CLAS graduation requirements, past efforts to reform these requirements, possible solutions to the challenges that we're facing in CLAS and a timeline for change.
- Take this back to your units to talk to people and look at the different perspectives for student success. We're being asked to remove barriers to make things more flexible for students as we do have market pressures with students potentially going elsewhere.
- We've made no changes to our graduation requirements since 2007.
- In 2003 there was no university core and the CLAS requirements were basically what functioned in that capacity. So, the core is essentially a Liberal Arts and Sciences core. There were 6 credits of arts and humanities and a third semester of language proficiency (up to 13 credits) with the option to do proficiency testing in a language area or complete a third year or use high school completion for the requirement.
- In 2007 we see a break between the university core and the CLAS core.
- We have what's called a distributive model, which means that in order to promote a broad based Liberal Arts and Sciences education, students check-off certain boxes. You have math, natural and physical sciences, humanities, social sciences, foreign language proficiency and so on. For a long time, it was believed to be the way we ensured breadth and depth in the major.
- What this means for CLAS students is that they have two different lists of CLAS core requirements to check off. They have the university core, which was the original Liberal Arts and Sciences core at the university. That's up to 38 credit hours and includes English, math, arts, humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, international perspectives and cultural diversity. That's the core that is undergoing revision right now.
- The proposal Michelle Comstock and Antwan Jefferson are working on reduces the number of credit hours to 31 and distributes it so that it maps on to the community college's GT3 pathways courses to make it easier for students from community colleges to transfer in the work they've already done. So, what's happening here is we're reducing credit hours to make more things transfer-in for students. This needs to be voted on by Faculty Assembly because faculty control the curriculum.
- But on top of the 38 hours, our students in CLAS have to take up to 15-29 additional hours beyond the core, which is creating a lot of barriers for students.
- Our students are graduating with 137 instead of 120 credits on average because they're having to fulfill these distributed boxes. This affects our graduation and retention rates.
- Faculty were asked to do some thinking about what is best for our learners in relation to the curriculum.
- There was discussion about the extra credit hours students are having to take. Do we know if most of those additional hours students are taking are due to the expansion of core requirements or is some of that coming from additional major requirements?
- Lindsey Tollefson in Academic Advising is doing an analysis to see where these credits are coming from. One thing we are seeing is that students are having difficulty and we are working on our DFW rates in the college. If a student is taking a course three times, that's

extra credits they pay for and it negatively affects the GPA. So, it really depends on the student.

- Over the years this Council has talked about double dipping and triple dipping of credit hours. We used to be really stringent about not allowing double dipping so that if one class counted for your major, you couldn't use it in a minor. We've eliminated most of that because it was a barrier to students and resulted in extra credits.
- The current situation creates complexity for students and advisors to follow students' academic progress. Lindsey regularly has to pull people off the graduation list because they're not where they think they are with completion of degree requirements, even though they have lots of credit hours.
- Our dual layer requirements also create problems for transfer students and people who change majors.
- In 2018, we had 6744 students. Before census 2025, we had 4170 students. That's a loss of more than 2500 majors in CLAS. Over the past few years, we've lost 100 faculty lines (this includes lecturers), but we have lost 2500 students (this includes transfer of the pre's as well as dips from ICB).
- This is a call to action for us to make our programs as exciting and attractive to students as possible to bring them in. We also need to take ownership of a narrative about how valuable a Liberal Arts and Sciences education is to society. We know that critical thinking, communication, data literacy and cultural respect makes society function well.
- The pressures are real and we need to consider the areas that are growing, which are Chemistry (specifically biochemistry), Biology and Psychology.
- Engineering, Business and Architecture have been growing. CAM was growing until this year and SPA shrank, but then grew this year relative to last year. We've been consistently declining.
- We are up for the first time this fall in SCH and in first-time full-time first year and transfer student headcount. Overall headcount is still slightly lower as a consequence of smaller classes the past several years, impacting the absolute numbers of students who return.
- CLAS has been working on trying to change the core starting in 2009 with Tammy Stone, who expressed concerns we needed to rethink the core and to turn to skills competencies.
- A few years later, Jeffrey Franklin and Marjorie Levine Clark and others served on the Learning Enhancement Task Force, that led to us all integrating essential learning outcomes and ACU assessment language, which was a national trend.
- In 2019, Pam Jansma formed the ACLES Graduation Requirements Task Force led by Michael Abeyta from Modern Languages.
- The Academic Planning Working Group was formed a few years ago and has been looking at a number of things, including graduation requirements. They will continue meeting weekly until we get a proposal prepared for the Council. They are aiming to have that ready by the middle of October, so that we can take it back to our home departments for discussion and a vote.
- The committee does need to replace two IRC faculty openings. Rich Allen, when he constituted the committee had carefully balanced all four areas of the college and different ranks. The committee needs an IRC faculty member from the Natural and Physical Sciences and an IRC faculty member from Integrated Sciences, each with

service in their contract. This is just to make sure we have equal representation across the areas and the rankings within the college.

- We have assembled a vast amount of data, research and conversations and surveyed best practices. The principle we agreed on at the beginning of the project was simplicity. It's got to be easy to explain, accessible, have flexibility to allow choice and legible because there's this pressure to get things transcribed that students can show to others. We wanted it to attract students, to be interesting and to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration. We wanted to do this with an eye toward managing the impacts to different units. We're not a healthy college if we don't have healthy units.

*Preliminary suggestions from the working group:*

- Communicate very clearly what the purpose of these requirements are because students aren't getting it.
- Reducing the credit hour burden and removing or reducing both distribution requirements.
- Thinking differently about the foreign language requirements.
- Consider how we ensure the writing, communication and data AI literacy components.
  
- We want to ask Antwan more about the core reform they are working on because we want to better align with peer institutions.
- The requirement for 45 upper division credit hours has been a barrier and students have found out they're not graduating because they took too many lower division courses and it wasn't caught in the degree audit in the right way.
- Lisa found out from CHD and HLC we don't have to have 45 upper division requirements and then be looking at bundling graduation requirements into certificates or credentials.
- We will take this presentation to faculty, to staff council, EPCC, to the Student Advisory Council, the Council of Chairs, the Budget and Planning Committee and other shared governance groups for feedback.
- There was additional discussion around the foreign languages requirement. The Modern Languages Department met with Michelle Comstock on August 20 and since then has made some changes within the department.
- The foreign language classes have always been 1010 and 1020. The requirement if students don't have any language is for two classes, which used to be up to 10 credit hours. Now the 1010 and 1020 classes in all languages will each be three credit hours. This is not yet approved by the EPCC but is under review.
- Changes like this can be implemented relatively quickly when the case is made to the Registrar.
- There was discussion about reducing impediments to graduation for students and looking at data around language proficiency. It was noted of the approximately 1700-2000 students who graduate each year from CU Denver, only 150 did not enter with language proficiency already.
- There was discussion of ideas for how to enhance enrollment in Modern Languages. For example, there are potentially hundreds of pre-health majors practicing in the state of Colorado who would take Spanish for Healthcare or Latin to be better prepared for anatomy lab and medical school.

- Beth Myers has clarified that foreign language is not an admission requirement, but rather a recommendation because the state removed it as a requirement.
- There are going to be other impacts to departments if changes are made to the graduation requirements. Right now, it's just one more of each area. If there's nothing that says we are CLAS when a student graduates, then what was the unique CLAS experience? We need to look at the graduation requirements as something that will make students understand the importance of the Liberal Arts and Sciences and that they gain something by being a CLAS major that's beyond just taking one additional class in each of the four areas of the college. We want the student to be able to say because they were in CLAS, not only did they get a great foundation and a great major, but they had this signature experience.
- We're trying to make final recommendations for this proposal in the next three weeks. Then it would be up for discussion within the units and then CLAS Council will need to vote and EPCC will need to vote. We want to get you something quickly because there is momentum on campus for the changes that need to be made. There are some real risks to CU Denver and to CLAS if we don't figure this out in a way that retains our liberal arts, removes barriers, contributes to student success and leads to successful completion.
- We welcome your input on ways we can figure this out for our college and maintain our distinct and crucial role in society and education.

**CLAS Bylaws Revision Updates:** Rodney Herring, Jeff Golub

- There were many changes made to the CLAS Bylaws, most of them minor or just wording updates. Council members will want to share these changes with their departments to see if the document is ready to be voted on or requires further discussion.
- CLAS Staff Council was working on revisions to their bylaws at the same time the Faculty Council was working on the college bylaws. At a certain point we realized one of the major things we needed to do for the college was to incorporate the Staff Council bylaws into this document. That has become Articles 2 and 3 of the current bylaws document.
- We thought CAM had a good introduction for their bylaws document with a preamble statement of their mission and values as a college. We adapted some of that with our own business statement by adding a preamble section. This is prior to Article 1, with a vision, mission and values statement on academic freedom, freedom of expression, and shared governance. We did not create new material, this came from different places on our website and references to Regental policy and other existing materials.
- In Article 2, Section 3, subsections B and C there is some discussion that has to do with the composition of our Council. There's an assumption we can't lean too much on IRC faculty and if 10% of your contract is service, this takes a lot of time. It was pointed out that in a lot of cases IRC faculty want to do this work even if it technically wouldn't consume their time. The committee deliberated about how to define this. In the end we put this into two subsections, B that the Council should comprise no less than 50% + 1 tenured contract faculty and C is the opposite of that, no more than 50% less one IRC faculty. It's more about wanting to be part of the council regardless of the service allotment and it's more about the principle of shared government itself.
- The policy for the grievance procedures is under consideration and still incomplete. Margaret Woodhull has a note there that this section is still being worked on.

- It should be noted is that many of the alterations were just minor updates to fix changes in language. For example, it's no longer TTF but TPT faculty. Wording like that had to be changed.
- Now that the college bylaws incorporate both faculty and staff, both staff and faculty should vote on these.
- There was a comment about composition of committees as referenced in the bylaws. We did not change anything about the composition of standing committees. There was discussion about if we're down over 100 faculty from where we once were, what does this do to the composition of our committees? If everyone's tapped-out in terms of their service commitments and there are still vacancies, how do we handle this? We should be thinking about this not only for CLAS, but also for the other service committees that need to be filled across campus.
- A copy of the bylaws with all of the track changes plus a finalized version with the changes accepted can both be made available to council members to review prior to the next meeting for additional discussion.

### **Council-Only Session**