

## INSTRUCTION COUNCIL

### MINUTES

**Thursday, April 16, 2026**  
**126 ITLE or Zoom**

<https://okstate-edu.zoom.us/j/93408932681?pwd=k7XfZJyUQZIDaBosY89x45j3PHDFfs.1>

Meeting ID: 934 0893 2681

Passcode: 097849

**9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

In attendance: Shannon Baker, Laurie Beets, Larry Burns, Aaron Christensen, Cynda Clary, Chris Francisco (Chair), Craig Freeman, Richard Frohock, Jeff Hartman, Ty Hawkins, Kelva Hunger, Diane Jones, James Knecht, Marlys Mason, Blake Myers, Christine Ormsbee, Rita Peaster, Darius Prier, Carisa Ramming, Rebecca Sheehan, Candace Thrasher, Ronna Vanderslice, Ashley Varnell, Robin Wilson.

Meeting was called to order at 9:02am.

- 1. Degree Works Update – Blake Myers, Office of the Registrar**
  - a. New approach for General Education D/G requirements**
  - b. System upgrade 4/24/2026**

Blake Myers (Registrar's Office) provided a brief overview of recent changes to Gen Ed implemented in the 2025–2026 academic year, highlighting in particular the shift from courses to credits. This change, along with increased flexibility allowing Diversity (D) and Global Cultural Competency (G) courses to also satisfy additional Gen Ed requirements, introduced complexity into degree audits. As a result, the Registrar's Office observed a rise in exceptions and adjustments, especially where courses could fulfill multiple requirements.

To address these challenges, Myers explained that the Registrar's Office has collaborated closely with graduation and college advising staff to develop a revised audit approach. The proposal includes two primary components. First, the additional Gen Ed requirement will be increased dynamically based on the number of unspecified D and G courses within the audit. For example, a published 10-credit requirement would expand to 16 credits if it includes three D and three G credits, allowing these courses to integrate more flexibly and reducing the need for manual exceptions. Second, a dedicated D/G block will be added to the audit as a safeguard, scanning the student's full academic record to ensure these requirements are satisfied and providing a secondary verification mechanism.

Myers emphasized several benefits of the proposed changes. Dynamic text will indicate when requirements are met through in-progress or registered coursework, accompanied by visual indicators such as a green check mark for completion and a blue half-circle for in-progress status. This ensures consistent reporting and prevents audits from prematurely reflecting 100% completion. Importantly, these updates will occur entirely within the audit system and will not require catalog changes. Feedback on the proposal was requested by May 1, with implementation targeted for the 2026–2027 catalog cycle. Myers noted that the proposal has already been presented to college representatives and received general support.

Myers' update also included information about an upcoming system upgrade scheduled for April 24th. While primarily a back-end update, it is expected to resolve several known issues and improve overall system performance without significantly affecting the user experience. In parallel, new audit notifications will be introduced to address transfer credit scenarios where lower-division courses articulate to upper-division equivalents but do not carry upper-division credit. These cases, identified through attributes such as "MATX" or "LEVL," have caused confusion for students and advisors when requirements appear satisfied in content but not in credit level. The new notifications will clarify these situations and provide guidance on how to identify affected courses using tools such as the Student Data Report or a "What If" audit. An updated FAQ for students and advisors will accompany this rollout.

During discussion, members sought clarification on the language used in the D/G requirement messaging, particularly to ensure that students and families clearly understand how combined or shared courses apply. Suggestions were made to expand explanatory text within the audit for clarity. Myers confirmed that additional language options could be developed. Members also expressed interest in a one-page summary document to share with advising and student success teams for broader feedback.

Overall, members responded positively to the proposed changes, noting the improvements in clarity and flexibility. Appreciation was expressed for the efforts of the Registrar's Office to address longstanding system limitations and advising challenges, particularly given constraints with the Degree Works vendor. Myers concluded by noting that some of the work has already contributed to updated system documentation.

## **2. Deadline for upper division and lower division undergraduate courses – Chris Francisco**

Francisco noted that for lower-division courses, there was general agreement that decisions should be delayed until after the completion of orientation and enrollment, given the high volume of incoming freshmen enrolling in 1000- and 2000-level courses during that period. Based on the academic calendar, a tentative deadline of July 20 was proposed, allowing approximately one week after the final orientation session for departments to assess enrollments and submit exception requests. Members expressed no significant concerns with this timeline, and it was agreed that the date would be confirmed with the Provost. In contrast, determining a deadline for upper-division courses proved more complex. Initial assumptions that decisions could be made earlier—potentially by the end of the spring semester—were reconsidered in light of enrollment data presented previously, which indicated that a meaningful number of students continue enrolling in upper-division courses through late May and into mid-June. Francisco discussed the need to balance allowing sufficient time for student enrollment with the institutional priority of redeploying instructional resources from under-enrolled courses. A flexible deadline during the week of June 22 was proposed, enabling units to submit requests as early as June 22 while allowing additional time within that week as needed. This approach was generally supported, though some concerns were raised about past enrollment challenges and the desire among student success staff for earlier decision points to minimize disruption to students.

The conversation acknowledged these concerns as reflective of prior experiences but emphasized that improved front-end enrollment management may mitigate such issues moving forward. Members also noted the challenges associated with canceling courses after students have left campus, while recognizing that prematurely canceling courses could negatively impact enrollment and access. Suggestions were made to use available data tools, such as orientation dashboards and transfer enrollment projections, to better anticipate demand for upper-division courses.

The discussion briefly expanded to consider course enrollment minimums and broader policy implications. Francisco noted ongoing interest in benchmarking course minimums against peer institutions and referenced preliminary observations that comparable universities may have lower thresholds, particularly for graduate courses. There was also acknowledgment of the need to balance efficiency with programmatic

integrity, allowing flexibility for departments to justify smaller courses when supported by broader resource management strategies. While no definitive changes were proposed, it was noted that further data—potentially including national comparisons—would be useful in informing future decisions. Francisco concluded by reiterating that the proposed deadlines would be discussed with the Provost and brought back for further consideration.

### **3. HLC preview – Chris Francisco**

Francisco provided an update on preparations for the upcoming Higher Learning Commission (HLC) visit. The university's Assurance Argument was finalized and submitted on March 23, using nearly the full word allotment. Approximately a week and a half later, the institution received a routine addendum request from the review team seeking additional information. While the initial request caused some concern, a closer review showed that most questions were expected and reasonable.

The addendum requests fell into three primary categories. First, reviewers asked for additional documentation related to the Innovation Foundation. Francisco noted that these questions were addressed promptly with the help of Burns and Chris Kuwitzky's team and expressed appreciation for the reviewer overseeing Criterion Four, who provided advance notice of the questions to be discussed in the CFO session. Second, the reviewers probed issues that the institution had anticipated, particularly regarding strategic planning. Because earlier HLC reviews had identified the lack of an approved strategic plan as an area of concern, the team requested further documentation and discussion on that topic. In response, the university added a special session on strategic planning and supplied materials related to both the 2022 and 2026 planning efforts, including working group documents, reporting mechanisms, and evidence of college-level alignment with the institutional plan.

The third category of requests involved technical and procedural documentation, such as recent Graduate Council minutes, General Education Advisory Council minutes, free speech complaint logs, student civil rights complaint logs, and information from the Ombuds Office. Additional meetings were arranged with the ombudsperson and the head of Human Resources to address these matters. Francisco emphasized that none of the requests suggested that the reviewers believed the university's submission had been inadequate; rather, they appeared to be seeking a fuller understanding of institutional processes and records. The team met earlier in the week and did not issue any further document requests, which was viewed as an encouraging sign that the initial addendum response had been sufficient.

An update was also provided regarding federal compliance. Peaster was recognized for her substantial work in preparing the federal compliance materials. Only two follow-up questions were received: one to confirm that the institution was not required to submit a particular item, and another requesting some of the same materials already sought through the addendum process, such as annual free speech reports and complaint logs. Francisco interpreted this limited response as evidence that the federal compliance materials had been well prepared and well received.

Francisco then previewed the HLC visit schedule for the following week and outlined preparation expectations for attendees. Members were reminded that they would participate jointly with DSAS in a Tuesday morning session, while some individuals would also attend specialized meetings related to their roles, such as Gen Ed or strategic planning. To help members prepare, Francisco identified three areas of focus. First, members were asked to be ready with examples of documented, data-driven decisions within their colleges, as reviewers have reportedly found such examples difficult for institutions to demonstrate clearly. It was noted that these examples need not rely solely on institutional dashboards but could include other forms of data, such as student surveys or curriculum review findings. Second, members were encouraged to think of examples in which programmatic assessment results led to meaningful changes. Third, they were asked to be prepared to discuss ways in which academic program review findings,

including program enhancement plans, have informed action and continuous improvement within their units.

In discussion, members asked whether examples could include decisions still in progress rather than fully completed initiatives, and Francisco confirmed that initiatives currently being implemented in response to identified needs would be appropriate examples. Questions were also raised about expectations for department heads and whether they should prepare similarly. Francisco responded that the main guidance for department heads was to be ready to discuss how they use data in decision-making, especially in the context of open forums. Associate deans were told they were welcome to attend open forums if schedules permitted, though they were not expected to attend every session.

Francisco also reviewed recent schedule adjustments for the visit. Open forum participation was reported to be at a healthy level, and an additional anonymous drop-in session had been added for faculty and staff who wished to speak privately with reviewers. The Criterion One and Two forum had been shortened from ninety minutes to one hour to allow one of the reviewers to attend the CFO session. Otherwise, few schedule changes had been made, which Francisco interpreted as another positive sign that the review team was not seeking additional targeted sessions due to unresolved concerns.

The update concluded with thanks to all those who had contributed to preparing the Assurance Argument and supporting documentation. Francisco expressed confidence that the institution is well prepared for the visit, while acknowledging the natural anxiety that remains until the final report is received. Francisco also explained the expected timeline following the visit: the institution will first receive a draft report and have the opportunity to correct factual errors before final findings are issued. A final ratification process will then occur through the broader HLC council. While official results will take longer, Francisco indicated that the university should have a general sense of the outcome within about a month of the visit. Francisco provided a brief review of the reviewers' onsite schedule, including campus meetings on Monday and Tuesday, work sessions on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning, and visits to both the Center for Health Sciences and the Tulsa campus as part of the multi-campus review process.

#### **4. Sub-120 hour degree update – Chris Francisco**

Francisco provided a brief update on the proposed framework for sub-120 hour bachelor's degrees. It was noted that recent State Regents agenda materials did not include any action related to sub-120 hour bachelor's degrees, despite earlier policy language suggesting movement in that direction. As a result, it appears that approval of a formal framework at the State Regents level may be delayed. While there are ongoing discussions occurring behind the scenes, no additional details were shared during the meeting. In response to this delay, the institution will continue to monitor developments at the State Regents level and proceed cautiously. The university has prepared the relevant degree proposals through its internal processes and will continue advancing those items internally so they are ready if and when authorization is granted. However, no proposals will be submitted to the OSU/A&M Board of Regents until the State Regents have formally approved a framework. This approach is intended to avoid placing the Board in the position of approving degree changes before the State Regents have established the necessary authority and guidance. The update concluded with the understanding that the university will remain prepared to act once a formal framework is in place.

#### **5. Curriculum**

##### **Course Action Summaries:**

##### **Ferguson College of Ag**

Clary clarified that one of the items was a modification due to a procedural issue: the course had inadvertently progressed through the approval process and appeared in the catalog, though it was in effect

a new course. As part of the correction, revisions were made to the course descriptions for both this course and a related 5000-level course.

The proposal had previously been tabled to allow further discussion after concerns were raised. Those concerns have since been addressed. Additional clarification was provided regarding distinctions between the proposed course and existing History courses; it was noted that while the courses are complementary, the differences are now clearly articulated, alleviating earlier concerns.

**Freeman moved to approve, and Mason seconded. Instruction Council members approved the Ferguson College of Agriculture course action summary.**

### **College of Arts and Sciences**

At the outset, Francisco noted that an additional course action related to an introductory computer science course would be circulated via email following the meeting. This item involves a discrepancy in prerequisite listings agreed upon between the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology and is expected to be a minor administrative correction rather than a substantive change.

The primary set of proposals reflected ongoing curricular revisions across several departments. In Art History and Graphic Design, changes are intended to create shared core experiences for students within a relatively small, multi-program department. These revisions aim both to foster stronger cohort-based learning and to address enrollment challenges by consolidating offerings more strategically.

In Geology, the proposed changes include decoupling lecture and laboratory components in introductory courses, following a model recently adopted in Biology. This adjustment is designed to provide greater scheduling flexibility for students and advisors, while also allowing more efficient allocation of faculty and graduate teaching assistant resources. Additionally, the department is combining two undergraduate courses into a streamlined sequence and integrating a graduate-level component, responding both to enrollment minimum concerns and curricular efficiency.

The School of Media and Strategic Communications (SMSC) proposed a new S-designated Gen Ed course intended to complement an existing, high-enrollment course on media in a diverse society. In Chemistry, revisions to math prerequisite requirements were presented for several courses. These changes are expected to broaden access to introductory courses while maintaining appropriate preparation for more advanced coursework.

A course action proposal for MUSI 2722 asking for an S designation was previously declined and was removed from consideration.

Hawkins stated that these course actions will be effective for the Fall 2026 semester. Peaster discussed that enrollment is already open and that these changes can be made as soon as is feasible. Baker stated that these courses will be in place by Orientation and Enrollment.

**Freeman moved to approve, and Clary seconded. Instruction Council members approved the College of Arts and Sciences course action summary with the exception of MUSI 2722, which was stricken from the course action summary.**

### **Honors College**

Frohock explained that the Honors College frequently relies on “topics” courses with zero-ending numbers to offer specialized seminars tailored to individual faculty expertise. While this approach provides flexibility, some of these courses have been offered consistently over multiple semesters and are expected to continue as stable parts of the curriculum. As a result, the Honors College is proposing to assign permanent course numbers to three such courses.

In addition to addressing the informal limit on how many times a topics course can be repeated, assigning permanent numbers will streamline the Gen Ed approval process. Currently, these courses must be re-approved for Gen Ed designation each time they are offered, which has created repetitive administrative work and recurring review by the General Education Advisory Council (GEAC). Establishing permanent course numbers would allow for longer-term approval, reducing redundancy and administrative burden for both instructors and reviewers.

The proposal was also framed as a way to alleviate ongoing frustration associated with repeated approvals for courses that have already been vetted multiple times, particularly given the annual turnover in committee membership.

**Hawkins moved to approve, and Clary seconded. Instruction Council members approved the Honors College course action summary.**

### **College of Veterinary Medicine**

Wilson explained that the proposal corrects an oversight from a previous submission in which elective courses were transitioned from pass/fail grading to standard letter grading. One course had been inadvertently omitted from that earlier update, and this action is intended to align it with the rest of the elective offerings.

**Sheehan moved to approve, and Mason seconded. Instruction Council members approved the College of Veterinary Medicine course action summary.**

### **Program Modifications:**

#### **Ferguson College of Agriculture**

##### **Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources in Food Science (361)**

Option addition

- Add option in Pre-Veterinary, Science
- Total credit hours: 120
- Reason for requested action: To provide students with the opportunity to take prerequisite courses for veterinary medicine or graduate school while studying food science and industry.

**Hawkins moved to approve, and Freeman seconded. Instruction Council members approved the Ferguson College of Agriculture program modification.**

### **College of Education and Human Sciences**

#### **Graduate Certificate in Student Affairs (New)**

New certificate request

- Delivery method: Electronic
- Total credit hours: 12
- Reason for requested action: To meet the needs of individuals with backgrounds in business, marketing, hospitality, K-12 education, or other areas who wish to transition into a career in higher education but lack the knowledge related to student development, program administration, and working in postsecondary environments.

**Sheehan moved to approve, and Freeman seconded. Instruction Council members approved the College of Education and Human Sciences new program request.**

## **College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology**

### **Master of Science in Engineering and Technology Management (411)**

Program name change

- Change program name from Engineering and Technology Management to Engineering Management

Reason for requested action: The program name change is recommended following a program benchmarking comparison analysis.

**Mason moved to approve, and Hawkins seconded. Instruction Council members approved the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology program modification.**

## **College of Professional Studies**

### **Bachelor of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence (New)**

New program request

- Request for a sub 120-hour degree
- Delivery method: Electronic
- Total credit hours: 92
- Reason for requested action: To provide students with the programming and technical skills needed for entry-level positions in data analytics, artificial intelligence, and software development.

### **Bachelor of Applied Science in Computer Programming (New)**

New program request

- Request for a sub 120-hour degree
- Delivery method: Electronic
- Total credit hours: 92
- Reason for requested action: To provide students with the programming and technical skills needed for entry-level software development, networking, system administration, and database positions.

Freeman presented program proposals from the College of Professional Studies (CPS), in collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), highlighting what was described as a promising model for future inter-college partnerships.

The Bachelor of Applied Science in Computer Programming leverages CPS's strength in serving these populations while drawing on CAS expertise in computer science.

The Bachelor of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence program builds on a foundational computer science core before shifting into specialized AI coursework. It was emphasized that, while related to existing programs, this degree is distinct in both structure and audience.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the program title for the Artificial Intelligence degree. Concerns were raised about the broadness of the name "Artificial Intelligence," particularly given the increasing prevalence of AI-related programs across multiple colleges. Some members questioned whether the title should be more specific to differentiate it from similar or emerging programs, including one in CEAT. Others argued that the broad title is advantageous from a marketing and recruitment standpoint, aligning with common terminology used by peer institutions and industry, and positioning the program competitively.

Additional context was provided that CAS had intentionally partnered with CPS to avoid structural and governance complications associated with offering a CAS degree under a nontraditional format. The partnership allows for clearer alignment of audience, delivery model, and administrative oversight.

Ultimately, the group agreed to move the proposals forward while acknowledging the naming concern. It was decided that the issue would be flagged for further discussion at the Council of Deans, with communication to the relevant deans to ensure awareness and alignment.

**Mason moved to approve, and Clary seconded. Instruction Council members approved the College of Professional Studies new program requests.**

## **6. Other**

The meeting concluded with a final announcement by Thrasher regarding deadlines for program modifications. She emphasized the importance of timing in relation to upcoming Instruction Council, Council of Deans, and OSU/A&M Board meetings. For any substantive program modifications intended for inclusion in the 2026–2027 academic year, materials must be submitted no later than April 24. Submissions received after this deadline will not be able to move through the full approval process in time for the June OSU/A&M Board meeting and therefore will not be implemented for that academic year.

It was clarified that non-substantive changes may still be processed through approximately June 15, after which attention will shift to finalizing and publishing the academic catalog. Any submissions beyond that point will be deferred to the following academic cycle.

Additionally, new courses follow a different workflow and do not require OSU/A&M Board approval, while new program proposals may be submitted at any time, as they become effective upon final approval from the State Regents.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:31am.

Minutes were recorded by Ashley Varnell.