

Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

MEMO

To: The UVM Faculty Senate

From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Colby Kervick, Co-Chair

Date: September 7, 2023

Re: Approval of a proposal to establish a Co-Major curricular Credential for Undergraduate students

On September 7, 2023 the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

The Curricular Affairs Committee unanimously approved a proposal to establish a new undergraduate academic credential: co-major.

Description

A co-major is a credentialed course of study focused on a particular area/topic germane to the mission and vision of the University of Vermont. Co-majors are for matriculated undergraduate students only and are intended to allow students to pursue two majors in different degree-granting units (i.e., colleges/schools), without having to do two separate sets of degree requirements. Students must successfully complete a major in their degree-granting unit to graduate with a co-major in another unit. Students may not do a co-major offered by their degree-granting unit.

Purposes

The purposes of co-majors are:

1. To broaden and enrich learning opportunities for undergraduate students without impeding the students' ability to complete their degree requirements in a timely manner.
2. To engage students in academic offerings available outside their home unit.
3. To expand interdisciplinary learning options at the University of Vermont.

Rationale

Students have regularly complained about the difficulty of pursuing dual degrees, given how that requires completing two sets of college requirements. While the move to the Catamount Core should reduce some of the barriers, not all will go away; students in CAS will continue to be required to take two semesters of language study, along with separate Humanities/Literature/Arts requirements, in ways that make their pathway through the CCC different than that of students in other units. Moreover, students in other academic units often have degree requirements that preclude them from being able to pursue a dual degree within a four-year time frame (e.g., students in professional programs such as Social Work, Nursing or Education).

Despite the difficulties, students *do* manage dual degrees. For example, since 2015 CAS has graduated 121 students who have completed a degree in another unit, including 33 with degrees from CESS and 28 with degrees from GSB. Although there are some very-much-to-be-expected pairings on the list (Economics BA in CAS with a BSAD degree from GSB; Math BA in CAS with a Secondary Ed-Math degree in CESS), there are also many that are much more unusual:

- Dance BA with a Dietetics, Nutrition and Food Science BS from CALS
- Film/Television Studies BA with a Plant Biology BS from CALS
- Philosophy BA with a Forestry BS from RSEN
- Japanese BA with a Computer Science BS from CEMS
- Theatre BA with an Engineering BS from CEMS

The goal of creating a co-major option would be to lower the institutional barriers to such combinations, which represent a deeply creative engagement with the liberal arts opportunities available at UVM.

There is a long-standing precedent on campus for this proposal. Namely, CAS students have long been able to major in Math and Computer Science—offered by CEMS faculty with CEMS courses—while remaining in CAS and only doing the CAS degree requirements. The difference between that example and the proposed co-major idea is an important one, though. In the CAS partnership with Math and Computer Science, students can have that as their *only* major in CAS. In the proposed model of co- majors, by contrast, students would have to have a major in their home unit and *add* a second, co-major in another unit. So, while there is some precedent for the idea of co-majors, this proposal does mark a change to existing practices.

History of this proposal

In summer 2022, Dr. Abby McGowan submitted a draft proposal to the CAC to create the credential of co-major. In fall 2022, based on that proposal and additional investigation by Dr. J Dickinson into other institutions that offer alternatives to the dual degree model, CAC co-chairs Dr. Colby Kervick and Dr. Stephen Everse commissioned a working group, chaired by Dr. Meaghan Emery to explore the feasibility, and identify recommendations for establishing a co-major credential at UVM. The subcommittee held six meetings between November 9, 2022, and January 10, 2023:

- November 9 with CAS Associate Dean Abby McGowan
- November 30 with CAC student representative Justin Lista
- December 19 with both CALS Associate Dean Kate Finley Woodruff and RSEN Associate Dean Jen Pontius
- December 21 with CESS Associate Dean Cynthia Reyes
- January 10, first meeting, with CEMS Dean Linda Schadler, CEMS Director of Curricular Enrichment Courtney Giles, and Director of CEMS Undergraduate Student Services Matt Manz;
- January 10, second meeting, with GSB Acting Dean Barbara Arel, Associate Professor and chair of GSB Undergraduate Studies Committee Glenn Walberg, and GSB Director of the Center for Student Success Sam Williams.

The CAC committee commissioned data from OIR to better understand the number of students pursuing dual degrees over the last 10 years at UVM. The CAC noted that data from OIR shows that relatively few students in CALS, RSEN, and CESS (in some majors) have graduated with dual degrees. There are on average twenty students per year who pursue dual degrees in two different colleges/schools annually. They graduate with more than 120 credits, often take the maximum number of credits allowed in a semester, in addition to summer courses, and rely on excellent advising to accomplish a dual degree within four years. These students are by nature ambitious and self-directed since it is very difficult for students to obtain dual degrees in different colleges/schools. In the committee's conversations with GSB it was suggested that students who drop out of dual degree programs, which one administrator noted included HCOL students, might be prime candidates for co-majors. Co-majors would allow students to pursue two majors across units in a more feasible way within a four-year degree program. Further this credential would support students in meeting academic and professional goals by providing a pathway to pursue disciplines of interest more deeply across units.

The CAC subcommittee submitted a final report summarizing their findings, which was shared with the full CAC. Upon consideration of that report, the full CAC voted unanimously on February 2, 2023, in favor of moving the process forward to establish the co-major as an official credential. Based on that decision, Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs and Student Success J Dickinson and Faculty Senate President Thomas Borchert convened a working group during spring semester 2023 to develop a formal proposal that would go up for consideration to the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees. Members of that committee included: Dr. Colby Kervick (CESS, Co-chair Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate), Dr. Abby McGowan (Associate Dean, CAS), Dr. J Dickinson (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Student Success), Dr. Thomas Borchert (CAS, President of Faculty Senate), Dr. Meaghan Emery (CAS), Dr. Christopher Brooks (RSEN), Dr. Cynthia Reyes (Associate Dean, CESS), Dr. Joan Rosebush (CEMS), Dr. Barb Arel (Acting Dean, GSB), and Dr. Courtney Giles (CEMS). The committee met throughout the rest of the spring semester to draft elements of the proposal. To guide the committee's work, Drs. Kervick and McGowan met with representatives of the Registrar's Office (4/4/23) and Student Financial Services (5/2/23), to consider the mechanisms for declaring and listing co-majors, and possible financial aid implications. This final proposal brings together insights and advice from these various drafts and consultations.

General Guidelines

The following are general guidelines for co-majors:

1. Undergraduate co-majors should offer UVM students a unique opportunity to combine academic offerings across units. Students may not do a co-major offered within their own degree-granting unit.
2. Each co-major is administered by one sponsoring academic unit which will be responsible for maintaining program quality.
3. Students would follow the rules from their degree-granting unit about the permitted overlap (also known as 'double-dipping') of credits from one degree requirement (major/minor/co-major) to another.

4. Co-majors share with the existing major a clearly stated mission, program goals, learning objectives and desired student outcomes. The curriculum must be scaffolded in such a way as to foster developmental growth of the student over the course of the co-major.
5. Co-majors must be at least 30 credits of academic courses, at least 12 of which must be at the 2000-level or higher.
6. If an existing major is 30-36 credits, the co-major would have the same course and credit expectations as the major. If an existing major is substantially more than 40 credits, then the sponsoring unit(s) must propose a 30-40 credit version of that major, available only as a co-major to students in other units (and not to students in the home unit).
7. Co-majors are not to be required for any degree program.
8. Not all co-majors are available for pairing with all degrees; proposals for new co-majors must include which pairings are possible and have the approval of the relevant units. Approvals of co-majors at the level of the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees only extend to those approved pairings, which must be listed in the catalog.
9. No more than 50% of the total credits for the co-major may be transfer credits.
10. For the co-major to appear on a student's transcript as successfully completed, students must meet the minimum grade point average (GPA) and other standards for the co-major as specified by the co-major's sponsoring academic unit(s). Co-Majors will have their own code in banner and will appear on the student's degree audit.
11. Successful completion of a co-major will be recorded in the student's official transcript. Unsuccessful completion of a co-major will not prevent a student from graduating and will not be recorded in the transcript.
12. The Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate shall review proposals for new co-majors with respect to these standards and criteria.

Operational Principles

1. **All new co-majors require a formal proposal:** To create co-major, the sponsoring unit (Department, School, or College) will prepare a proposal following the proposal format approved by the CAC.
2. As with any new or substantially modified academic program, co-major proposals must undergo the established review and approval processes.
3. **MOUs required for co-majors:** All proposals must come with signed MOUs between the sponsoring unit and whichever other units will offer the co-major, negotiated through the Associate Deans of both units. These MOUs must follow the template approved by the CAC.
4. **Application and admission to co-majors:** Admissions will be handled by the sponsoring unit; students will have to apply to add a co-major and will not be approved to add the co-major until they have met with an advisor from both the home unit and the sponsoring unit. The sponsoring unit(s) will notify the student and the home unit (the college or school of the student's major) of acceptance/rejection, or of the declaration of the new co-major.
5. **Catalog description:** Co-majors will be described in detail in the UVM Catalog, specifying what pairings with other majors/degrees are possible.

6. **Commitment:** Sponsoring units will make a good faith effort to make curricular components available on a regular basis so that students can complete their co-major in a timely manner.
7. **Advising:** The sponsoring unit(s) will develop and maintain an effective system of advising for all students enrolled in its co-majors. Home units will have at least one student services advisor who has expertise in co-major advising, to be the point person for questions from their students. That advising should include careful consideration of possible impacts of a co-major on financial aid awards.
8. **Certification and student records:** The unit which houses the co-major shall certify student completion. The sponsoring unit is the only body authorized to make course substitutions for satisfying the co-major requirements and shall notify the student's home unit in writing regarding any substitutions. The student's home unit major advisor is not authorized to make course substitutions in co-major requirements. As with all credentialed academic programs, co- majors will be indicated as such in students' transcripts.
9. **Alteration of co-major:** Alterations to co-majors made by the major's home unit and which meet or exceed the noted criteria must be submitted for review by the Curricular Affairs Committee as described in *Format for Proposals to Substantially Revise a Curriculum, Academic Program, Research or Service Endeavor*.
10. **IBB revenues:** For IBB purposes, student credit hour (SCH) revenues associated with a student's major would go to the student's home unit.

Co-Major proposal process

Proposals for co-majors will be developed at the departmental level, in consultation with their unit's Dean's office. Co-major proposals would follow the routing system that proposals for substantial revisions follow moving through the following stages of approval:

1. Department or Program
2. Unit Curriculum Committee approval (including any votes required by the college/school level)
3. Associate Dean or Dean approval (signed MOU)
4. Provost approval
5. 15 day circulation
6. CAC approval
7. Faculty Senate notification
8. Board of Trustees notification

Co-majors are for existing majors only. If a unit desires a new major offering to be utilized as a co-major, they first must do a new program proposal for the new major. Any co-major curricular proposals approved by the CAC prior to March 31, can be included in the following year's catalog.

Note: no co- major curricular proposals can be considered approved until they have been voted on by CAC.

Implementation/Assessment Plan

Provided that this new credential is approved, proposals from the units wishing to propose co-majors can be initiated. Initial proposals would originate at the departmental level, proceed through college level curriculum committee and then full faculty review, and then proceed to review by the Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate.

If the credential is approved for inclusion in the 24-25 catalog and at least a few co-majors launch soon thereafter, the CAC proposes having a three-year trial period before we assess co-majors as a credential category. That would mean assessment in the 27-28 academic year.

Assessment of the co-major credential would be conducted by the Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, based on the following:

- *Enrollment data on utilization:* How many students have pursued co-majors? Which ones are proving popular, and which ones are not being utilized? Is the category of co-majors proving useful to students?
- *Data gathering from students enrolled in co-majors:* Through surveys, focus groups, and review of transcripts, we would explore what opportunities and challenges are posed by co-majors, how the processes and systems work, and if any changes are needed.
- *Data gathering from advisors of students in co-majors:* Through surveys and focus groups with faculty and staff advisors, we would explore what opportunities and challenges are posed by co-majors, how the processes and systems work, and if any changes are needed.
- *Data gathering from unit curriculum committee leads and Associate Deans:* Through a focus group facilitated by the co-chairs of the CAC we would explore how the proposal process is working in units and explore if changes are needed to the proposal or MOU templates.

Summary

The Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate in partnership with Dean Abigail McGowan and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Student Success engaged in a year long process in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders to develop an academic credential that would enable undergraduate students at the University of Vermont to pursue a co-major in a discipline of interest outside their academic unit. We believe that this new academic credential will broaden and enrich learning opportunities for undergraduate students without impeding the students' ability to complete their degree requirements in a timely manner, engage students in academic offerings available outside their home unit and expand interdisciplinary learning options at the University of Vermont. If the credential is approved by the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees, then curricular proposals for co-majors could begin being reviewed during the spring 2024 semester with the new credential being available for student to pursue starting with the Fall 24-25 academic catalog year.

