

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY
University Senate

Resolution on University Degree Planning Policy

18-15/16-APC—March 29th, 2016—Second Reading

RESOLVED: That the Humboldt State University Senate recommends to the Provost that the University Degree Planning Policy and associated recommendations be accepted as submitted; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Senate recommends to the Provost the creation of a new Degree Planning Oversight Group that will be responsible for coordinating and overseeing the development and implementation of the degree planning software, tracking the implementation of policy recommendations across campus, and developing consequences for not meeting milestones; and be it further,

RESOLVED: That the Degree Planning Oversight Group operate under the direction of the Provost, inform the University Senate periodically of implementation progress, and provide recommendation for policy through the APC for approval by the University Senate; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the University Senate extend its gratitude and thanks to the Degree Planning Software Working Group for its work.

RATIONALE: *The Degree Planning Software Working Group has completed its work and provided a series of policies and recommendations necessary to implement the use of degree planning software at HSU. Use of degree planning software in conjunction with major academic plans is a best practice for increasing student success. By providing students with a defined pathway to graduation, it reduces the time required for routine advising, allowing advisors to use their time effectively. In addition to helping students see their pathway to graduation, it will help administrative units identify and plan for course demand. Effective implementation of degree planning software will require coordinated effort on the part of many individuals and units. The implementation, policy and process document represents a practical and achievable blueprint for bringing degree planning software onto our campus to provide an effective planning tool for advisors and students in order to better ensure their success. The use of degree planning software will also allow for the implementation of prioritizing student registration appointment dates in accordance with their progress to degree, rather than by the current total number of units earned. It is the recommendation of the Working group that this be implemented as it will motivate and reward students who are pursuing the fastest path to*

graduation, thus helping to increase graduation rates and lower time to graduation. Furthermore, it is recommended that existing milestones (Golden 4 -GE Area A and Area B: Mathematical Concepts by 60 units) have consequences for non-compliance and that two new milestones be developed by each program, also with consequences for non-compliance. It was felt that consequences were necessary for the milestones to be meaningful in encouraging student behaviors (such as learning to write) that would increase their chances of success in the degree. Data indicate that the Golden 4 milestone has not been observed, with approximately 600 juniors and seniors, who matriculated as freshmen to HSU, missing at least one of the Golden 4 courses from their transcripts. The additional milestones could be specific courses, or one of a list of courses, along with a specific grade and time to complete. The idea of a milestone is that we set standards for expected academic progress that students will encounter at an early point in their degree. The standards indicate where the students need to be in terms of academic performance to be successful in their major. If students are unable to meet these standards at that time, they will be required to work with an advisor to make a plan. This might mean developing better study habits, getting a tutor, spending more time on homework, or it might mean switching to another major. Coming to this challenge point early on will result in a greater chance of success, or at the very least, spare them from further years in a major that they do not have the momentum to complete. Recommendations for the consequences for not meeting milestones will be developed by the Degree Planning Oversight Committee with wide consultation. They will then be sent to the Academic Policy Committee for further development and guidance through the University Senate policy approval process. It is recommended that the consequences be consistent across the campus for clarity for students, many of whom move between programs, and to make administration of the process realistically enforceable. Milestones will be set by each program after the consequences have been determined. With this sequence, programs will be able to decide on the appropriate difficulty of the milestone with full knowledge of the consequences of non-compliance.

University Degree Planning Policy

Degree planning software facilitates a timely path to graduation by providing roadmaps or Major Academic Plans (MAPs) for every program of study. These roadmaps link curricula, course offerings, program requirements, pre-requisites, and course sequencing into semester-by-semester plans. It also provides aggregate data to assist departments with appropriate course planning. The Degree Planning Software Working Group developed a series of policies and recommendations to effectively implement the degree planning software. The recommendations build on existing policies, structures, and expectations whenever possible to streamline practices and minimize the need to create more policies to implement the software (i.e. enforce current policies rather than create new ones).

In the following document, six policies are listed, followed by recommendations of the Degree Planning Software Working Group to guide their implementation.

Policy 1. Registration priority will be based upon % of degree requirements completed rather than number of units accrued.

Registration priority will be set using completed units in GE and Major classes that directly lead to meeting graduation requirements first and equally, followed by elective classes that help with getting to 120 units but are not part of either GE or Major requirements.

Recommendations:

- We recommend that % of degree requirements completed be calculated by weighting degree completion components. The implementation and development of an equitable and workable process will be the responsibility of the Oversight Group.
- Testing various models for point assignments against hypothetical students in a set of our majors is recommended prior to implementation to assure that the calculation performs as intended and does not create unfair conditions.
- This will include GEAR requirements. Units completed that do not go towards GEAR or major requirements, i.e. free electives will only be counted for registration priority if the major they have selected has free electives and they help the student reach 120 units.
- If a student switches to a major with fewer free electives, or none, these courses may no longer contribute towards completing a degree, thus this change of major may result in a reduced registration priority.
- Recommendations for specific cases:
 - Double Major
 - Calculate scores using the major that gives a student the highest priority (but not using both majors).
 - Undeclared Majors
 - Will calculate utilizing the “undeclared” major degree code in the u.achieve/DARS system
 - Units that count in multiple areas
 - Units that count in multiple categories (e.g. GE and Major) will be added to the calculation of % in each area.

Policy 2. Policy recommendation on Expected Academic progress:

Each academic program will develop two milestones in addition to the current milestone of completing basic subjects by 60 units. The Degree Planning Oversight Group will develop recommendations for consequences for non-compliance with the milestones with wide consultation. The recommendations will be further developed by the Academic Policies Committee and brought before the University Senate for approval as new policy. The current policy: Academic Progress Milestones for Undergraduate Programs will be revised to reflect these changes.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the specific consequences for missing milestones be developed by Spring 2017, and the individual program milestones be developed by Fall 2017, so that both will be in place for the Spring 2018 registration period. This sequence is suggested so that programs can develop milestones that are appropriate to the consequences.
- It is recommended that departments consult with Institutional Research when picking milestone courses. Certain courses and course grades may have greater predictive value for future success in a given major and thus would make better milestone courses. Consequences for non-compliance with milestones will be standard across the university, while the milestones themselves be designated by departments.
- Programs will provide support and a clear set of steps for students not meeting milestones. Other student support services should also be involved with this transition. Milestone timelines will be set according to units attempted rather than semesters, so as to not disadvantage part-time students.

Policy 3. Use of degree planning software by students will be mandatory

Recommendations:

- A registration hold will be lifted when the plans are completed and reviewed by the appropriate advisor. This would be an appropriate time for advisors to discuss progress to degree and relevant milestones. The students will still have full freedom to register for the courses they desire to take, that fit in their schedule, or that still have spaces when their registration time comes up. The plan will need to be updated each semester to reflect adjustments. (Some provision/distinction will need to be made so that freshmen are using the system for their first year but probably not be required to fill out a four year plan until they meet with their advisor in either their first or second semester.)
- Mandatory use of degree planning software should begin in spring of 2018. This will allow departments the time to develop maps in spring and fall 2016 with a soft roll out of the product beginning in spring 2017 and to develop and provide degree planning software training to advisors and students. We envision this roll out to be an open invitation to all students to use the planning tools as maps are finalized with mandatory use of the system in spring 2018.
- Ensure that the structure of mandatory use and any consequences for lack of compliance be based upon student actions and not be a result of structural or policy

oversights. The overarching philosophy of degree planning software should be that it is a planning and advising tool that helps our students achieve their goal of graduation in as short a time as is possible.

Notes:

As the maps and software implementation are being developed, the following policy/procedure issues will need to be addressed and finalized:

- o Faculty/Student training for using the tool.
- o Map update procedures and approvals.
- o Map development deadlines and enforcement.
- o Phase in for requiring four year map completion including undeclared majors and freshmen/transfers.
- o Types and number of holds (Administrative/Advising, one set for semester and plan updates or separate holds?).
- o Consider issues specific to impacted programs.

Policy 4. Graduation workflows and Major Academic Plans will be standardized in format across all programs

Recommendations:

- Major Academic Plans will be written by each program accounting for co- and pre-requisites, students taking two semesters of English Composition instead of one, and/or needing additional math courses to prepare for the GE math requirement, and students transferring to HSU.
- All departments will use a common template for presenting MAPs to students.
- The standard template would replace all existing versions of roadmaps and be made available in a centralized, easily accessible site.
- Undeclared MAPs will also be developed utilizing standard templates.
- Each program will develop both a visual flowchart MAP and a curriculum listing.
- MAPs should show accurate and realistic paths that include 5th year courses if necessary.
- Utilize Spring/Fall of 2016 to develop and finalize maps.
- Develop appropriate web sites and links to facilitate the distribution and access to Maps.
- Office of Academic Affairs will develop ongoing maintenance plan including roles and responsibilities for updates to flowcharts and Course lists.
- Associate Deans will work with departments to review and manage development of the templates.

Policy 5. Advisors, Department Chairs and the Registrar will use degree planning software to enter and approve course substitutions.

Recommendations:

- Degree planning software will show the substituted courses, and the names and dates of approved substitutions. The procedure will be an electronic version of our current process, facilitated by degree planning software.
- We recommend the following workflow for course substitutions using degree planning software:
 - **Advisor** enters substitution in degree planning software, routes to **Department Chair** who approves and routes to **Registrar** for official entry in DARS (u.achieve).
 - Substitutions made during a semester will appear in DARS prior to enrollment the following semester.
 - An audit trail will be implemented on the degree plan so that students and advisors can see the status of the substitution approval process.

Note:

This is essentially the policy we have now but uses electronic means rather than paper for entry. It is in the best interest of students and advisors to have substitutions officially entered in DARS as soon as possible. An electronic process consisting of using degree planning software alone may not in and of itself be efficient enough to facilitate faster processing and so the substitution process must be reviewed in order to promote a faster turnaround in the Registrar's Office without unduly burdening Registrar personnel.

Policy 6. These recommendations, when implemented and taken as a whole, will replace the current major contract system.

Recommendations:

- The Degree Planning Oversight Group should be assigned the task of developing, vetting and implementing degree planning software and the required policy and process components as outlined in this document.
- The Degree Planning Oversight Group should have wide representation from faculty staff and administrators from the different colleges, and solicit student input, whether that be membership on the Group, presentations to the Associated Students or inclusion of students in beta-testing of degree planning software.
- The committee should report to the Provost, inform the Senate of progress and consult with the Academic Policies Committee regarding any changes to policy that might require Senate approval.