

# Strange Bedfellows

## The Registrar's Office and University Policy and Curriculum Committees

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## Overview

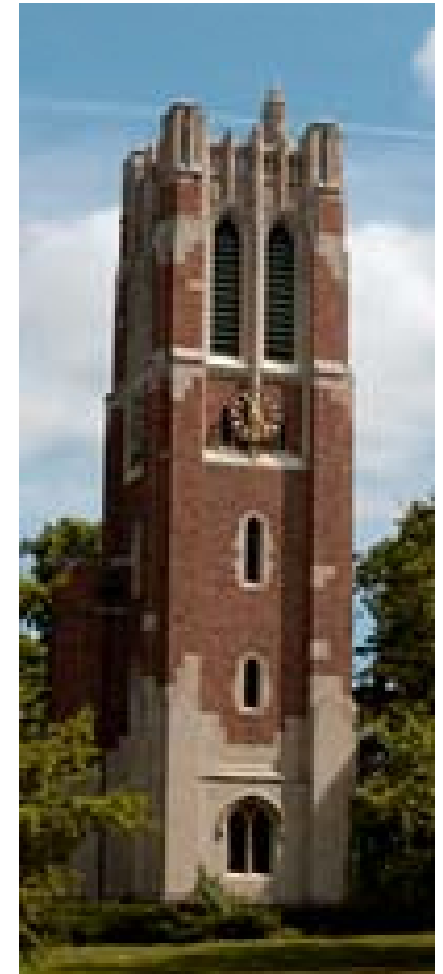
- Introduction to Michigan State University
- Academic Governance at Michigan State
  - Introduction to relevant committees
- University Curriculum and Catalog
  - Housed in the Office of the Registrar
  - Path of curricular requests
- The Changing Role of the Registrar
- Working with the Committees
  - Graduation Honors
  - Comprehensive Proposals
- Take Aways
- Questions and Answers





# Michigan State University

- Nation's pioneer Land Grant institution
- Located in East Lansing, MI
- 46,648 students (36,337 undergrads)
- 17 Colleges
  - 3 Medical Schools
  - MSU College of Law
- 6,860 degrees awarded in Spring 2008
- 6,284 unique courses active in Spring 2008



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## Assumptions

Curricular and academic policy changes:

- Occur via University-level academic governance
- Are guided by faculty input (faculty are responsible for the content of the curriculum)
- Require efficient implementation for institutional effectiveness

Office of the Registrar is an academic support unit:

- Staff understand how to implement curricular and policy change

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## MSU Registrar's Office

Office of the Registrar at MSU includes:

- Registration Services
- Certification Services
- Information Services
- Academic Records

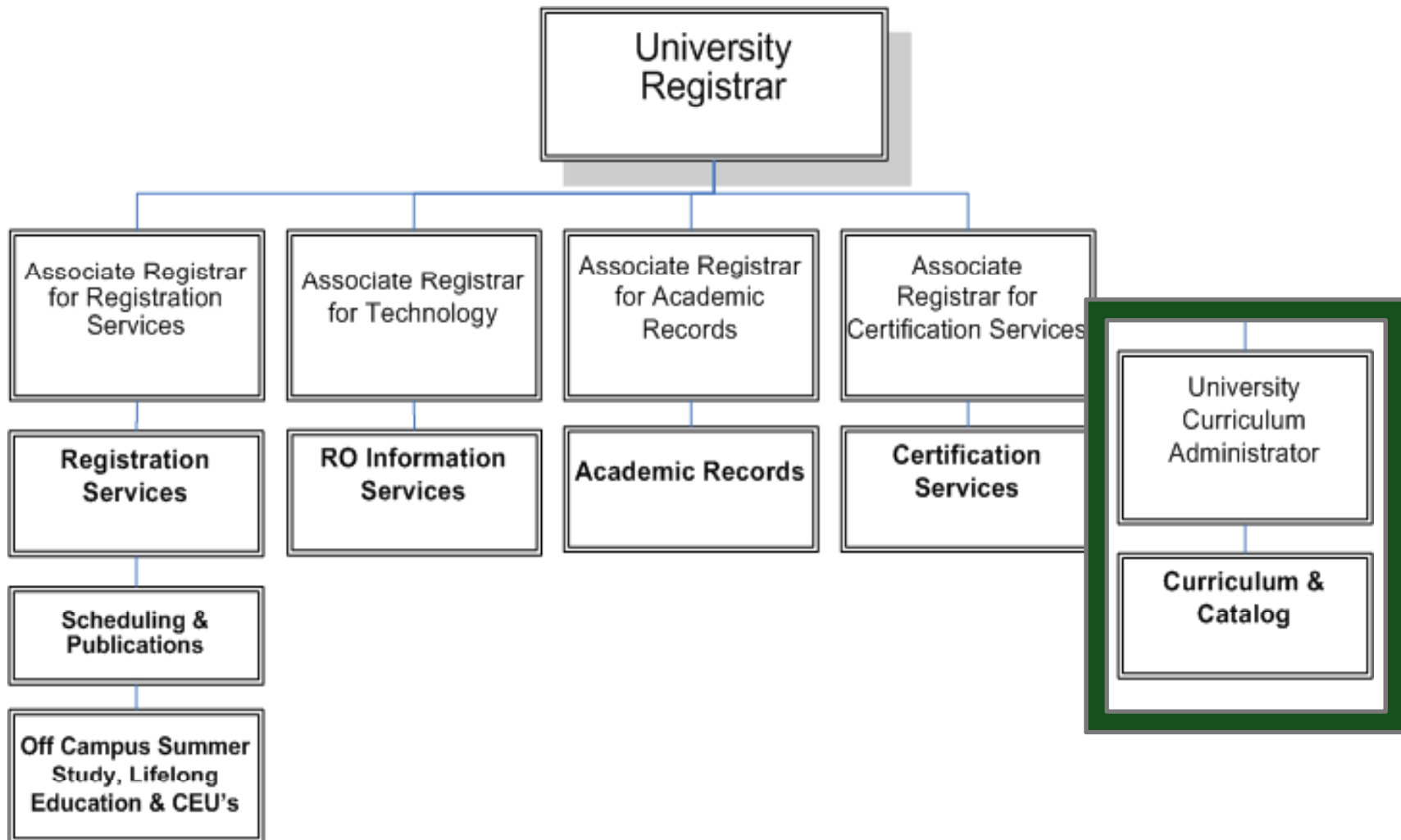
and

- University Curriculum and Catalog



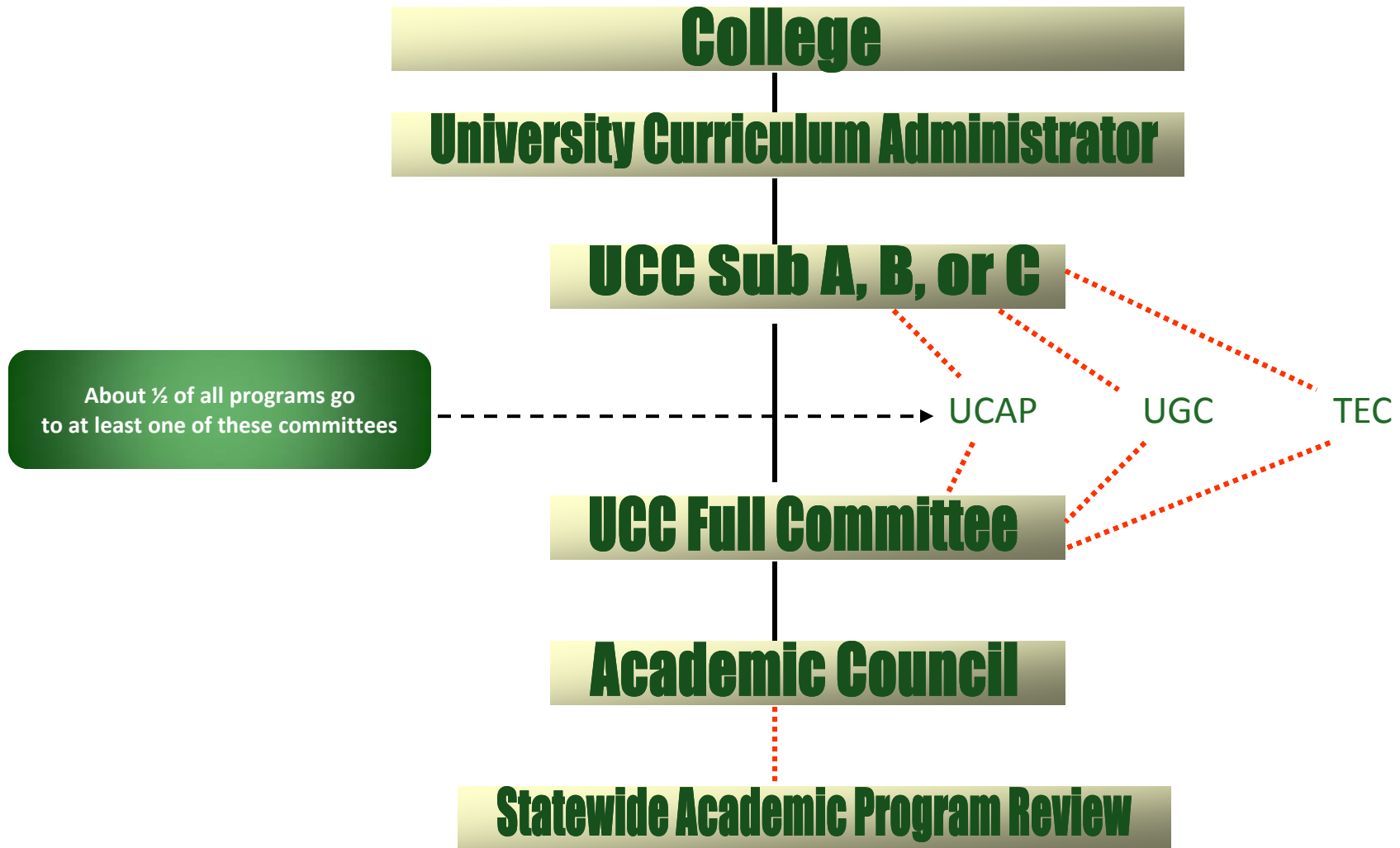


# MSU Registrar's Office



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## Path of Curricular Requests



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## Academic Governance



Standing Committees established by University Bylaws

- University Committee on Academic Policy (UCAP)
- University Committee on Curriculum (UCC)
- University Graduate Council (UGC)

*Taken from Bylaws for Academic Governance -*

<https://www.msu.edu/unit/acadgov/bylaws/section4/index.html>





# Academic Governance

## Coordination Among Committees

- **UCAP:** 4.4.8. The Committee on Academic Policy shall coordinate its activities with those of the Committee on Curriculum, the Graduate Council, and other appropriate Academic Council Standing Committees.
- **UCC:** 4.5.5. The Committee on Curriculum shall coordinate its activities with those of the Committee on Academic Policy, the Graduate Council, and other appropriate Academic Council Standing Committees.
- **UGC:** 4.6.6. The University Graduate Council shall coordinate its activities with those of the Committee on Academic Policy, the Committee on Curriculum, and other appropriate Academic Council Standing Committees.

*Taken from Bylaws for Academic Governance -*

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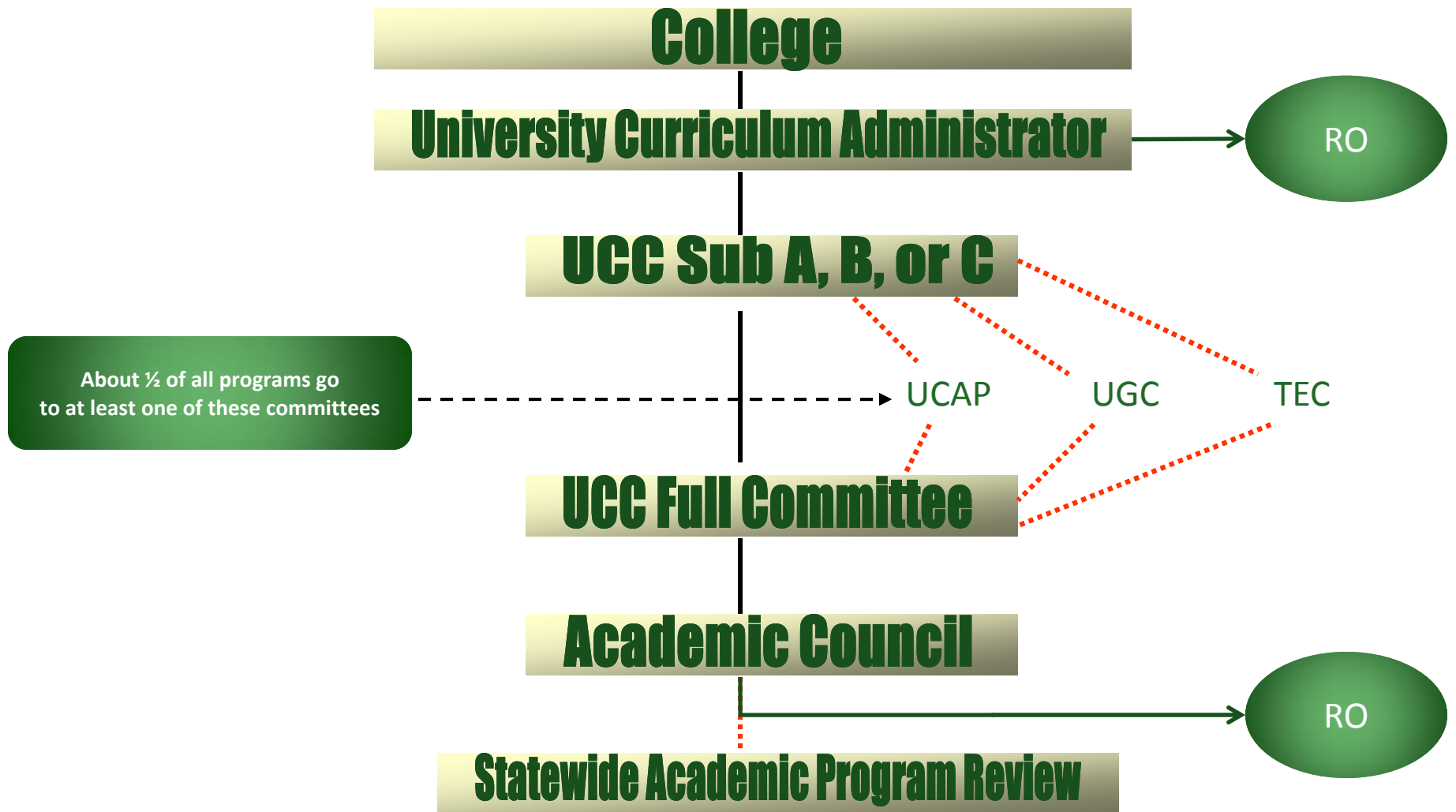


# University Curriculum and Catalog

- Became part of the Office of the Registrar July 1, 2000
  - Provost's executive decision
  - Quick change
- Improves the link between curricular and academic policy change and its implementation
- The Registrar's Office:
  - knows from requests it receives for exceptions, if curricular program requirements and related academic policies work;
  - is the steward of academic data;
  - serves as a resource for academic governance committees and university administrators who need data to inform curricular proposals and new or changed policies.
- Alignment of curricular approval process with enrollment periods and degree certification

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## Path of Curricular Requests



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## Changing Role of the Registrar

- RO is traditionally a “policy enforcing” office
- Technology puts enormous amounts of information into reach
  - Students / Courses / Programs / Room scheduling
  - Requirement fulfillment
- Intimately acquainted with institutional data
- Uniquely positioned to observe trends in curriculum and academic policy
- Now has a responsibility to provide advice on these trends

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## Changing Roles

- Continuing evolution in job functions
- Presents challenges and opportunities
- Changes how the office works
  - What types of work are performed
  - Functionally
- Requires a changing skill set for Registrars and Associate Registrars
  - Data analysis
  - Writing, Editing
  - Knowledge of scope
  - Staff development



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## Working With the Committees

- Two examples of how the Registrar's Office took a lead role and engaged with various University committees:
  - Graduation Honors
  - “Comprehensive” Proposal



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## Graduation Honors

- Spring 2006: The RO discovered that policy and practice were out of sync regarding the awarding of graduation honors



- Awarding graduation honors in higher percentages than stipulated by policy
- The RO gathered data from the previous 10 years of graduates

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## Graduation Honors - Findings

- The ten-year trend showed an increase in cumulative GPA of graduates
- Policy stipulated that 6% receive “With High Honor” and the next 14% receive “With Honor” (20% of graduates total)
- *Academic Programs* catalog indicated what the “target” GPAs for assigning honors were, but had not been updated in several years





## Graduation Honors - Policy Revision

- Engaged with curriculum and policy committees to revise *Academic Programs* catalog
- The percentages of graduation honors were reaffirmed at 6% and 14% (20% total)
- Determining the GPA thresholds necessary to meet those percentages is handled by the RO
- New GPA thresholds were implemented in stages over a three-year period

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## Working With the Committees

- Two examples of how the Registrar's Office took a lead role and engaged with various University committees:
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## Comprehensive Proposal

- A series of seemingly unrelated topics came under discussion over an academic year
- Became increasingly obvious that the curriculum committee couldn't address the topics independently of each other
- UCC requested information and analysis to review, act, and send forward for additional governance review

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## Comprehensive Proposal

- When one aspect of the curricular structure is changed it affects other aspects of the curriculum
  - Institutional mission affects where, how, and when academic programs are delivered
  - Faculty are responsible for curricular content and have opportunities to provide input on policy
  - Individual components of degree programs need to relate clearly to one another for students to understand requirements and track progress
  - There is a relationship between undergraduate and graduate-level programs

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## Comprehensive Proposal

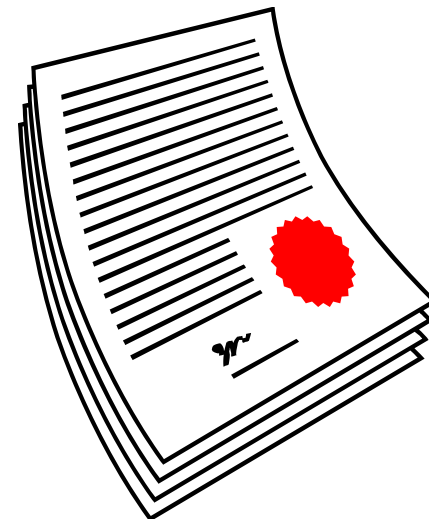
- Benchmarking best practices with peer and other institutions is important to enhance program competitiveness, inter-institutional agreements, and credit transfer
- Questions, concerns, and suggestions from MSU faculty and academic units, as offered by their representatives to academic governance, need to inform policy and taxonomic changes



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## The Process

- The University Curriculum Administrator and the RO worked with the Provost's Office and UCC to generate a draft set of proposals
  - A rationale for each
  - Background information
  - Supporting documentation
  - How it related to established policy and/or other proposals



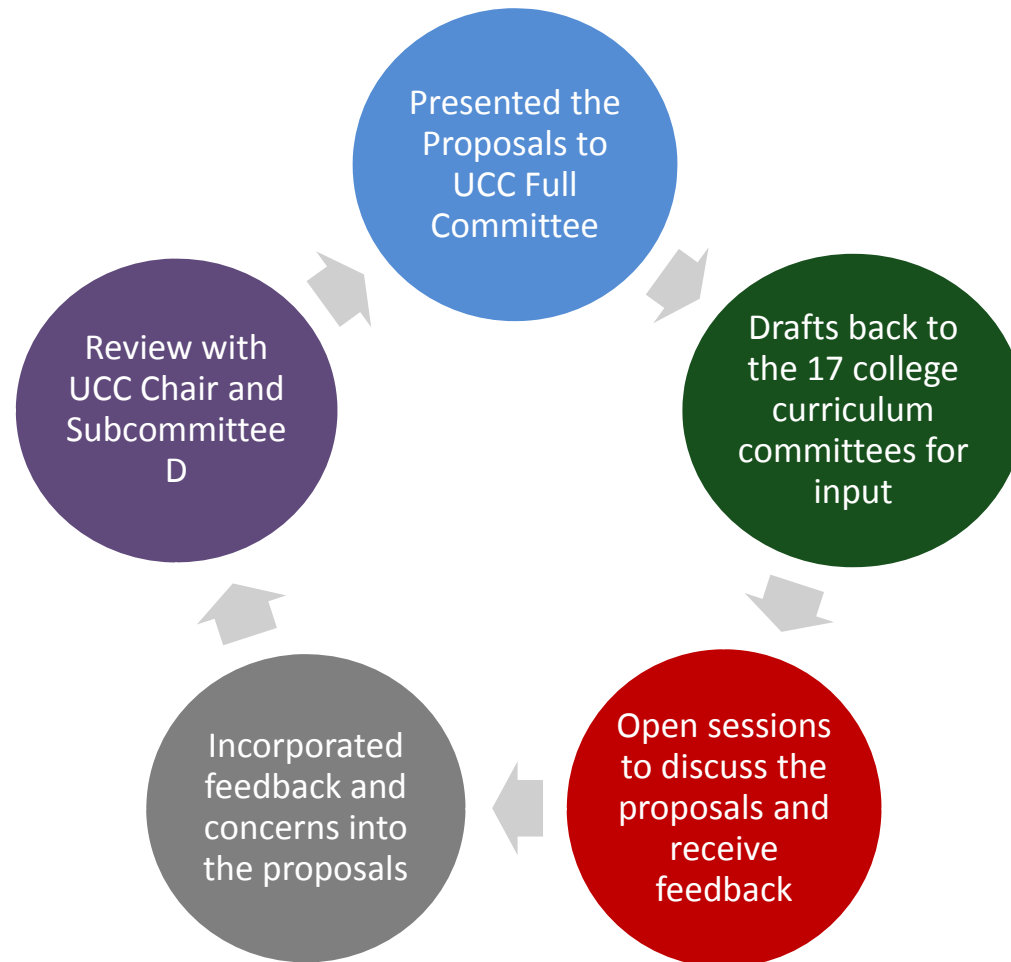
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## The Process (cont.)

- Iterative review with UCC Chairperson and Subcommittee D (the chairs of the other UCC subcommittees)
- UCC representatives took the drafts back to the 17 college curriculum committees for input
- UCC held open sessions to discuss the proposals and receive feedback from across campus
  - Attended by hundreds of people
- Incorporated feedback and concerns into the proposals
- UCC took action and forwarded **ten** of the **twelve** proposals for further governance review



# The Process – The Flow





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## The Process (never ending)

- UCAP and UGC reviewed and took action on all of the proposals
  - Some finer points were tweaked in committee
- Once approved, the University Curriculum Administrator updated *Academic Programs* catalog and the Associate Provost sent notification to the campus about the changes



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## Take Aways

- RO involvement in Curriculum and Policy committees can be mutually beneficial
- Requires the support of the Provost's Office and "buy in" from the committees
- RO's role is advisory and must defer to the faculty
  - When to be seen and not heard
  - Need to ask "What are you trying to accomplish?" and then suggest ways to reach the goal



# Take Aways

- Registrar's Office
  - Staff implicitly ask themselves, “How will colleges and students react?”
  - Staff meet with and invite feedback from directors of student affairs and associate deans.
  - Office has enhanced its credibility because it can roll-out a change and indicate consultations with colleges.
- Colleges
  - Know they can ask questions freely.
  - Know they can request changes (technological / process / etc.).
  - Provide input and raise issues.
  - Know their explanation of the impact on students will be heard.



# Questions and Answers

What questions do you have at this time?

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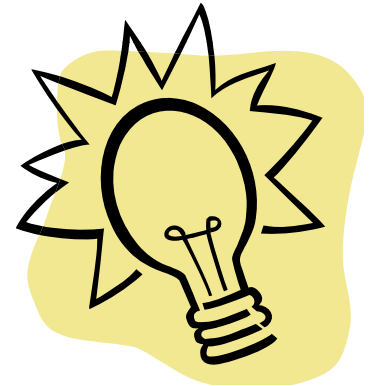
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