

Approved November 18, 2015, by the Faculty Senate

FINAL REPORT:

**Working Group on New Course Creation and
Faculty Oversight at Rice**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Changes to the Rice undergraduate curriculum are occurring at an increasing pace. Extra-departmental course offerings are growing, and co-curricular and experiential courses such as off-campus internships represent an increasing share of both departmental and extra-departmental course listings. The existing new course creation process:

- Minimizes faculty oversight of extra-departmental new course requests
- Precludes faculty participation in decisions concerning changes to the overall shape of the curriculum in their schools
- Allows substantial inconsistency among departments in the awarding of credit hours and the oversight of co-curricular courses.

The SACSCOC reaccreditation process has underscored the desirability of a process that will address these issues and prevent future problems. We recommend the following changes to the new course creation process:

Revise the New Course Request Form to include information that allows fuller evaluation of proposed new courses (draft attached).

- The information fields shown in boxes 2 and 3 of the attached draft form are new
- Box 1 will contain all the data required by the OTR
 - These fields are not all shown on the draft form – they will include the information on the current new course form

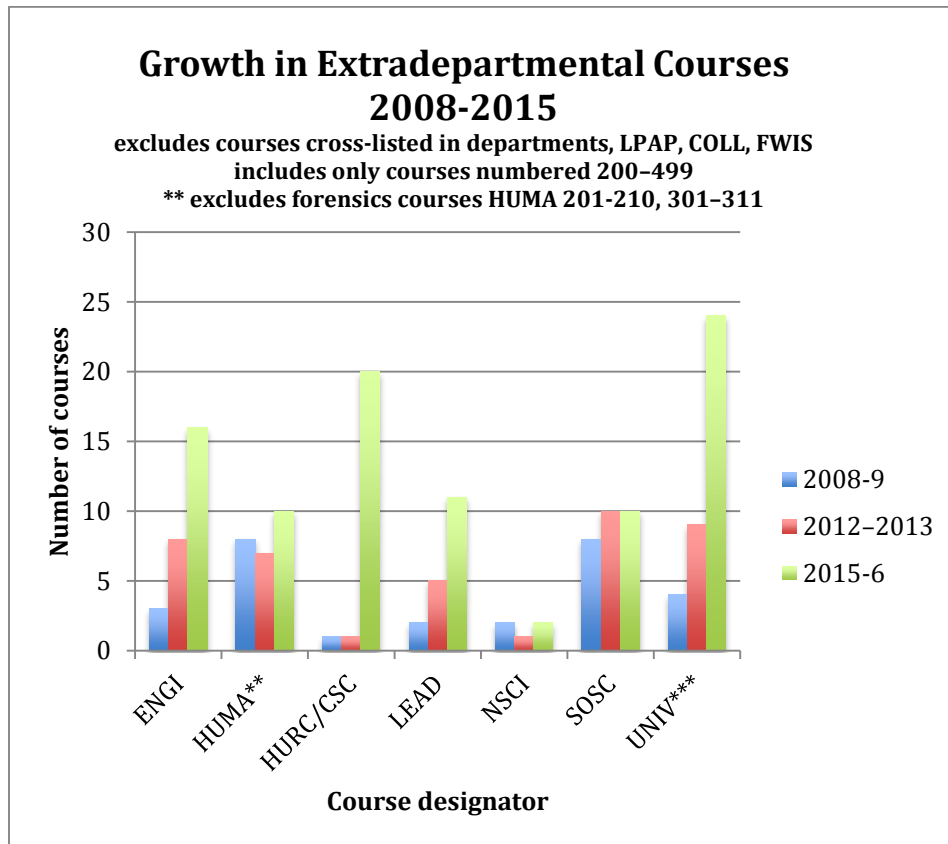
Revise the review process for New Course requests (flowchart attached)

- Add a level of review by a School Course Review Committee (SCRC) for departmental and extra-departmental new course requests within the School:
 - The SCRC comprises the Director of Undergraduate Studies or other curricular rep from each department in the School and the Dean
 - Scope and purpose of review of departmental requests:
 - Insure consistency in awarding of credit hours
 - Share information on best practices for department review
 - Scope and purpose of review of extra-departmental requests
 - Provide faculty evaluation and oversight
 - Insure consistency in awarding of credit hours
 - Facilitate school-wide conversation on co-curricular courses and broader curricular developments
- Waive SCRC review for courses offered on a one-time basis or on a first-time, pilot basis
 - For Special/Advanced Topics/Seminar courses designated for this purpose, the OTR will create a section for the one-time course. It will appear with the section course title in online registration and transcript
- Review of new course requests originating outside of schools (e.g., UNIV), will be conducted by the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum.

REPORT

The Senate Working Group on New Course Creation and Faculty Oversight of Curriculum has identified a number of curricular issues that indicate the need for a more consistent, university-wide process for creating new courses. While curriculum historically has resided mainly within departments, increasing numbers of new undergraduate courses are housed outside of departments, potentially impacting the shape of the overall curriculum (Figure 1 – note that FWIS, COLL, and LPAP are excluded from this analysis). In 2008, there were 23 such courses; in 2015 these approach 100 in number. A significant proportion of these are non-traditional courses such as off-campus internships. The growth of these extra-departmental, co-curricular courses has the potential to impact departmental course enrollments. While many departments require faculty oversight of off-campus internship and research opportunities, there is substantial inconsistency in this regard among departments and schools.

Our work has thus concentrated primarily on recommendations for the creation of new undergraduate courses, but these recommendations could be easily extended to graduate courses.



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The Senate Working Group's preliminary review of recently created undergraduate courses, with particular attention to those housed outside of academic departments or degree-granting programs, identified several areas of concern.

- **INEFFICIENCY.** Courses may be created that are redundant with a course with the same or similar title and content already offered by a department elsewhere in the university. (e.g. POLI 437 Education Policy and EDUC 350 Education Policy; Physiology courses in BIOE and BIOS)
- **UNEXAMINED CURRICULAR IMPACTS.** How will the availability of off-campus internships repeatable for up to 6 credit hours impact student choice of elective courses? What impact might this have on traditional course enrollments?
- **CREDIT HOURS AWARDED DO NOT CONFORM TO STANDARD CREDIT HOUR GUIDELINES.** We have 1 credit hour courses that meet only a 3-4 times a semester to hear visiting lecturers and 3 credit hour courses that meet for three hours weekly but have few or no assignments. This inconsistency is facilitated by course creation procedures that do not request any information on contact hours and anticipated assignment load.
- **COURSE CONTENT OF DUBIOUS SUITABILITY FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT**
 - Internships that feature, for example, faxing, copying, downloading research articles, or data entry should be paid positions
 - Internships that are well designed and worthwhile but not academic in nature may not be suitable for academic credit
New transcribing or portfolio methods to record co-curricular experiences should be explored as an alternative to the current system in which co-curricular activities are routinely offered for academic credit.
- **COURSES THAT MAY NOT BE NOT FULLY COMPLIANT WITH SACSCOC RULES AND RICE GUIDELINES**
 - Example: Courses taken abroad for Rice credit (Rice is the School of Record), in the absence of an MOU stipulating that Rice assures the content and rigor of the courses offered.

We propose that changes to both the current New Course Request Form and the procedure for evaluating course requests will enable the faculty to better exercise its responsibility for oversight of the curriculum in the face of changing circumstances. Many of our peer institutions (for example, Vanderbilt, Duke, Stanford, Emory, Princeton, Harvard) have a Committee on Courses that evaluates new course proposals and proposals for substantive changes in existing courses (examples provided in Appendix 1). It is the Working Group's opinion that a similar

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process is needed at Rice to reduce redundancies, evaluate wider curricular impacts of proposed changes, ensure consistency in the awarding of credit hours, and maintain the quality, coherence and SACSCOC compliance of our curriculum. However, we recommend the creation of a Course Review Committee in each school, rather than a university-wide committee.

The current procedure is deficient in three areas:

1. The current New Course request form requires only the information needed by the Office of the Registrar to create a course in their system. This does *not* include basic information needed to evaluate a course, such as:
 - the name and university status of the instructor
 - contact hours
 - expanded information on course content beyond the 50-word course description for the course catalogue
 - course objectives, overall goals, and/or learning outcomes
 - a list of activities beyond class meetings; and a tentative list of readings and/or other assignments – these, together with contact hours are needed to assign appropriate credit hours for a course.Without this information, it is hard to know how the proposed course can be evaluated for suitability, especially if it originates outside of an academic department or degree-granting program where internal curricular oversight procedures are in place.

Proposed change: a revised new course request form that includes this information (draft attached)

2. Too few eyes see a proposal, and the current procedure provides no faculty overview of how new courses are shaping and impacting the curriculum. Currently, a new course request is seen only by a Dean after it leaves the originating department and before it is processed by the Registrar. Some Deans have delegated signing authority for new course forms to an assistant, in which case the Deans' role in evaluating the request is not clear. Of concern are inconsistent policies and standards in different schools, redundant course offerings, and in some cases, lack of compliance with SACSCOC policies.

Proposed changes:

- A. *Add a level of school-based faculty review.*
For each school with multiple departments (Architecture is excluded), a School Course Review Committee (SCRC) will be created. We propose that the Directors of Undergraduate Studies (undergraduate major advisors) and the Dean should constitute the oversight committee for evaluating proposals for new undergraduate courses.

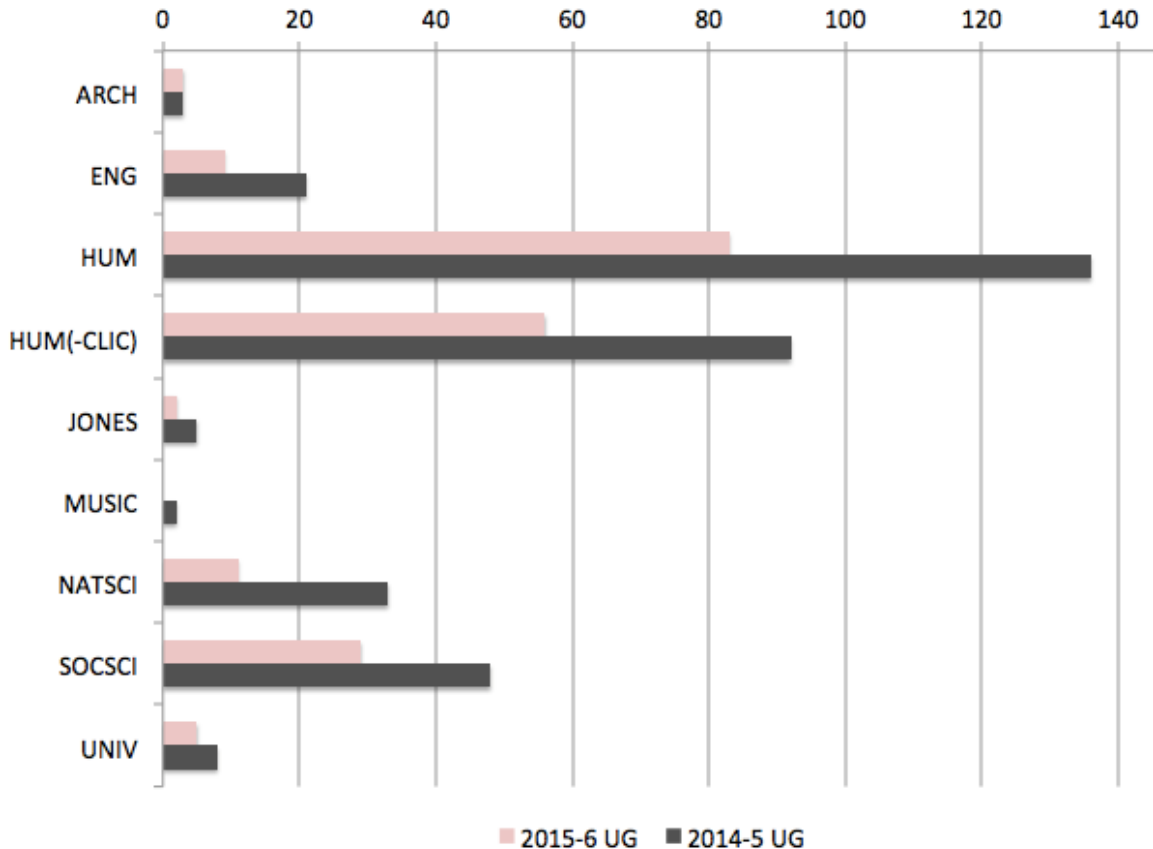
Alternatively, a department may designate a different curriculum representative to the committee.

For some schools, such as Architecture and Music, this will not involve any significant change to their current procedures. For other schools that already have school-wide curricular committees, it may simply involve a more active role for those committees. The most significant change will be in schools that do not have school-wide procedures for discussing and approving curricular changes.

- The scope of SCRC review of departmental new course requests is limited to review of credit hours awarded for consistency with proposed contact hours and workload.
 - Review by the SCRC of school-based, extra-departmental courses will have a broader scope, providing faculty oversight of these requests, insuring consistency of credit hours awarded, and facilitating school-wide discussion on requests for co-curricular new courses.
- B. *Waive SCRC review for courses offered on a one-time or first-time pilot basis*
- Have a Special/Advanced Topics/Seminar course designated for this purpose in each Department. The OTR will create a section for the one-time course. It will appear with the section course title in online registration and transcript
- C. *The CUC will be notified of all approved courses.*
This gives a faculty committee the means to understand whether and how the overall architecture of the undergraduate curriculum is changing.
- D. *For non-school courses (e.g., UNIV), the CUC provides the additional level of review for proposed new undergraduate courses.*
See attached flow chart of the proposed process

The question arises as to the workload that the SCRCs might anticipate and how much time the process might require. Data provided by the Registrar for the past two years indicates that the number of new undergraduate courses per year is very low in some schools and exceeds 50 only in Humanities (shown on the accompanying chart both with CLIC language courses and without). These data suggest that the workload and time associated with this process will be minimal in almost all schools.

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Number of new courses created in the different schools, plus UNIV courses over the past two academic years. Humanities is shown with and without CLIC language courses.

3. There is no procedure whatsoever for overseeing and approving substantive changes to courses, or for removing courses that have not been taught for many years.

Departments that undertake significant changes in their curriculum, as Economics recently did, may not realize that several interdisciplinary majors and minors have required courses in that department and will have to change their program descriptions and requirements accordingly. There is no process in place to identify the downstream impacts of these changes at the time they are proposed and to notify the affected programs.

Recommendation: identify what constitutes a substantive change to an existing course, along with a procedure for ensuring oversight of these changes. (This goes beyond the current charge of the Working Group)

- Pass approved course changes through the CUC to assure that affected majors and minors outside of the department can be notified.

Courses that have not been offered during an agreed-upon period (5 years?) should be deleted from the GA

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DRAFT REVISED New Course Request Form
(For UG courses, and UG/GR equivalent courses; excludes FWIS, COLL, LPAP)

BOX 1. INFORMATION NEEDED BY OTR [IN ADDITION, DATA FIELDS ON THE CURRENT NEW COURSE FORM WILL BE ADDED BY OTR]

Course Title:

Course subject Code:

Course number:

Instructor (Name, Position/Title):

Department affiliation:

Course Location: Campus Off-campus (specify location)

Distance education

Check box if this is a one-time course offering

2. INFORMATION FOR DEPARTMENT USE AND EVALUATION (if Dept course)

Course rationale: Please indicate the place of the course in the major or other curricular initiative, service to non-majors, free elective, etc.

Course overview – expanded course description

Specify the anticipated Student Learning Outcomes.

Briefly indicate the nature and amount of work required of students and plans for assessment.

3. INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL COURSE REVIEW COMMITTEE or Dept. if one-time course

How many contact hours planned?

Anticipated number of credit hours and how these will be apportioned.

The Rice credit hour policy stipulates that one credit hour typically requires two units of study/preparation time (100 minutes) by the student for every one unit of contact time (50 minutes) each week during a 14-15 week semester. Some courses involve meetings or work other than traditional classroom meetings, including laboratories, independent research or study, event series such as attendance at film screenings, musical performances, or speaker series, experiential learning. Credit hours for these courses are awarded on contact hours and work that are comparable to the time required in the credit hour policy.

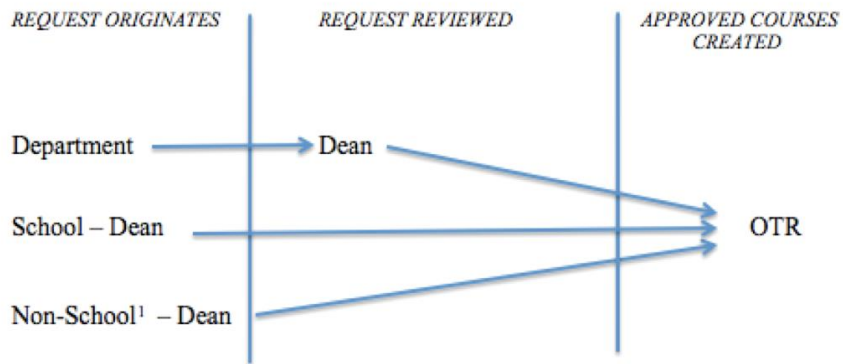
Are you aware of any currently offered courses that overlap with the proposed course?

Signatures: Director of Undergraduate Study
or Dept curriculum designee (if originating in a Dept)

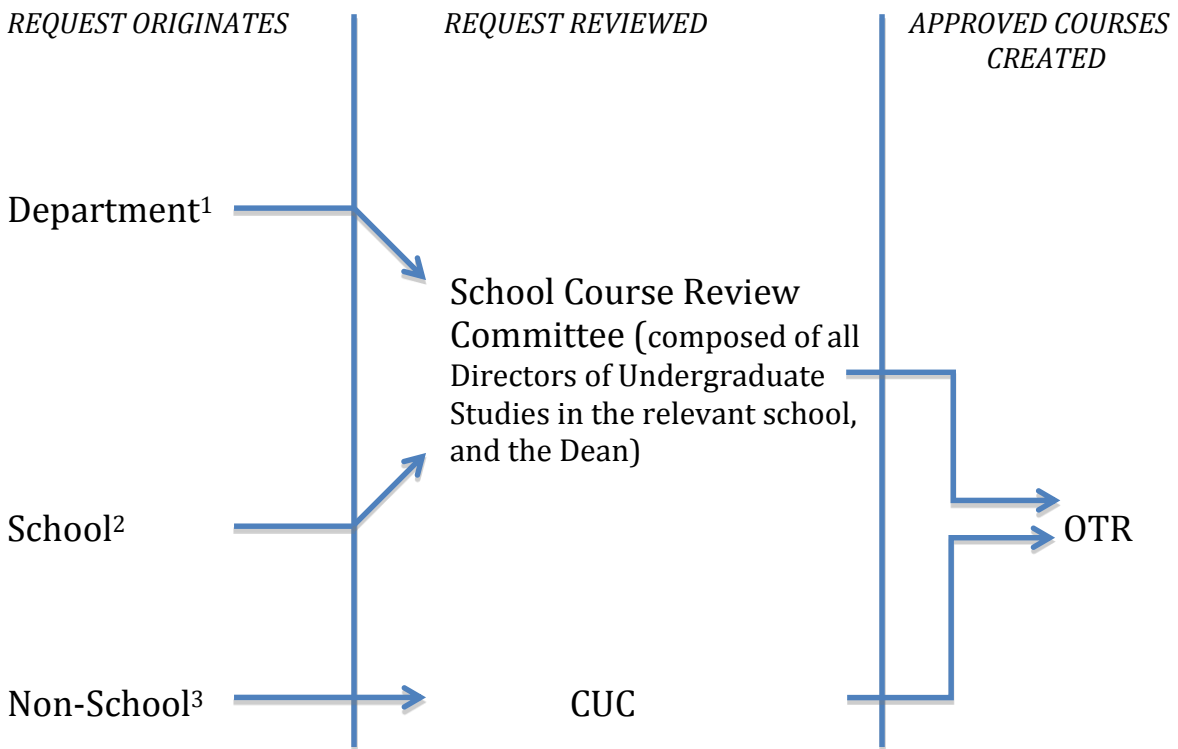
Department Chair or Program Director (all requests)

Chair, School Course Review Committee (or Chair of CUC if not originating in a Department or School):

CURRENT NEW COURSE REQUEST PROCESS



PROPOSED NEW COURSE REQUEST PROCESS



¹ Course request form signed by Director of Undergraduate Studies or other Department curriculum designee and Dept. Chair

² Includes (but not limited to) courses with subject codes ENGI, HUMA, HURC, NSCI, SOSOC. Course request form signed by Program Director (if applicable) and Dean

³ Includes (but not limited to) courses with subject codes LEAD, UNIV. Course request form signed by Program Director (if applicable) and Dean of Undergraduates

Appendix 1. Peer Institution Course Review Process

School	Committee	Charge	Oversees Programs	Oversees Courses	New Courses
Brown	College Curriculum Council	The College Curriculum Council (CCC) is an elected body of faculty, students, and administrators charged with overseeing undergraduate curricular offerings at Brown. The Committee reviews individual course proposals as well as larger programs of study, including concentrations, study abroad, and degree programs. In addition, the Committee is responsible for academic policies related to the curriculum, such as grading policies, the role of undergraduate teaching assistants, and course evaluations.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cornell	College Curriculum Committee	The Committee is a Standing Committee of the College charged with the primary responsibility for curriculum matters in the College, including: 1. The philosophy, nature and maintenance of the distribution requirement. 2. The consideration and approval of new courses, changes in course offerings and deletion of courses and cross listing. 3. Create or revise college policies in undergraduate education. Major policies are presented to the CALS Faculty Senate for discussion and approval. 4. Informing major fields of study, departments and faculty on issues relating to curriculum including appropriate credit hours for courses. 5. Providing guidance on course scheduling matters to the Director and Associate Director of Academic Programs; and 6. Inter college programs within Cornell University and the United States	Yes	Yes	Yes
Duke	Faculty Committee on Courses	Requests for new majors, minors, and interdisciplinary certificate programs, as well as requests for revisions to existing majors, minors, and certificate programs, are submitted to the Office of Curriculum and Course Development, and reviewed by the faculty Committee on Curriculum, a standing committee of the Arts & Sciences Council. The Committee on Curriculum consists of representatives from the divisions of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, as well as the associate dean and director of the Office of Curriculum and Course Development, who is an <i>ex-officio</i> member of the committee. For curricular revisions, final approval rests with the Committee on Curriculum. Final approval of all new majors, minors, and certificate programs rests with the Arts & Sciences Council, which considers the recommendations of the committee.	No	Yes	Yes

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Emory	Curriculum Committee	This committee shall study and make recommendations to the faculty concerning the curriculum of Emory College. It also gives final approval to the addition, deletion and alteration of courses not affecting uniform requirements and approves concentration programs as submitted by departments and divisions. <i>The charge of the committee from the Emory College Faculty By-Laws (Last revised September 8, 2004)</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
Princeton	Committee on the Course of Study	<p>The Committee on the Course of Study considers and recommends to the Faculty appropriate action on all matters connected with the educational policy of the undergraduate program. These include: requirements for admission to the University; requirements for all bachelors' degrees; methods of instruction, programs of study and regulations concerning scholastic standing; the institution of new courses and the modification of existing courses in the undergraduate curriculum; and the promotion, monitoring and publicizing of experiments in teaching.</p> <p>All proposals to add courses to the permanent curriculum, delete courses from the permanent curriculum, or make substantive changes to existing courses or departmental programs of study are reviewed by the committee. Proposals which receive positive committee recommendations are presented to the full Faculty for a vote at the monthly meetings of the Faculty.</p>	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tulane	Undergraduate Curriculum Committee	<p>The functions of the committee shall be to deal with all matters relating to the undergraduate curriculum, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To report each semester to the faculty the list of courses recommended to the faculty for addition to or deletion from the curriculum b. To make recommendations to the faculty regarding new degree programs or changes in degree programs c. To receive recommendations from and to make them to individual departments and the faculty about all matters concerning course curricula and the description of course curricula and major requirements in the undergraduate bulletins d. To review and to make recommendations to the faculty concerning programs granting School of Liberal Arts credit for work or study conducted off campus under the jurisdiction of Tulane University, and to receive annual reports from the directors of these programs e. To advise the dean on any questions concerning curriculum and degree programs f. To advise the dean or the registrar on any questions concerning registration 	Yes	Yes	Yes

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Yale	Course of Study Committee	<p>The Course of Study Committee is the standing committee of the Yale College Faculty with which directors of undergraduate studies have the most direct and frequent contact. It is composed of members of the faculty drawn from the divisions of the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences; members of the Yale College Dean’s Office; and undergraduate students. The Course of Study Committee is the main agency by which the Yale College Faculty controls, supervises, and improves the curriculum of Yale College. One of its chief responsibilities is considering and approving (or rejecting) proposals for additions or alterations to the curriculum submitted to it by departments and programs.</p> <p>In substantive matters the approval of the Course of Study Committee is not final but is subject to ratification by the Yale College Faculty. The addition of any new course to the curriculum, or a significant change in any already existing course or program, thus requires the approval of the Course of Study Committee and then of the faculty. Proposals for New Courses and for Changes in Existing Courses, Changes to Requirements of the Major, and Notification of the Course of Study Committee’s Actions discuss the main points of business that a DUS has with the Course of Study Committee. These pages complement the section Yale College Programs of Study (YCPS) and Related Publications.</p>	Yes, partial	Yes	Yes
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