

Princeton USG Senate
Meeting 9
November 21, 2021
8:00PM



**Undergraduate
Student
Government**

Introduction

1. Question and Answer Session (15 minutes)
2. President's Report (5 minutes)

New Business

1. Vote100 Presentation: Joe Shipley and Ana Blanco (15 minutes)
2. Mixed Concentrations Update: Austin Davis (10 minutes)
3. Referendum Language Review: Austin Davis and Preeti Chemiti (20 minutes)
4. Daily Princetonian Honor Code Article Review: Stephen Daniels (10 minutes)

Mixed Concentrations Student Focus Groups

Academics Committee

November 2021

Background

The Academics Committee hosted three different focus groups in early November to gather feedback and questions from students about the existing proposals for a new, cross-disciplinary course of studies. Namely, our goal was to gauge the general consensus among a small sample of students regarding the mixed concentrations and minors proposals, their preference(s) between the two, and any additional considerations that they believed should be taken into account throughout the next phases of this design process.

48 students signed up to attend any of the three focus groups. Overall, approximately half of those students participated in the focus groups. The students present represented a broad range of academic backgrounds, including anthropology, computer science, comparative literature, and chemical and biological engineering. In each 45-minute session, members of the Committee asked a series of questions to better understand the students' positions on the proposal.

General Takeaways

- Students generally expressed interest in both models, but found the minor proposal to be the more pragmatic solution to the lack of cross-disciplinary work on campus.
 - All students admitted that mixed concentrations would fill a gap in the existing University curriculum, but found that the current proposal may be overly complicated to implement.
 - Additionally, some students believed that a minor might better serve their interests within their specific course of study rather than an integrated, in-depth cross-disciplinary program like a mixed concentration. For instance, two quite distinct programs might be better served by a concentration-minor pairing.
 - A smaller number of students believed that it would be ideal to have both programs, as this system would better meet the degree to which students would like to mix and match different academic programs.
 - In general, students want a degree of control over what their course of study looks like; flexibility is key.
- Students voiced that mixed concentrations/minors would serve various personal and academic purposes.
 - Most students were not primarily interested in the external credential; instead, many wanted to have a form of personal recognition of the academic work they completed outside of their concentration. It would also allow students to develop their intellectual curiosities and meet their need for academic flexibility.
 - That being said, students caught between two very different concentrations believed these programs would be helpful for graduate school and other programs. For example, a student studying computer science was concerned an English graduate school would be suspicious of her lack of an English credential.

- Many students were supportive of a mixed concentration or minor because it would add more structure to current paths. For instance, one of the primary ways students can complete cross-disciplinary work under the current system is through an independent concentration, which puts much of the onus on students to structure their work.
- Like the faculty, some students were concerned about the prospect of dilution.¹ Many wanted a course of study that promoted depth over breadth, and believed the current mixed concentrations model would not fulfill this objective.
 - Some preferred mixed concentrations to resemble a double major program; in the language of the students, a “90/40” model would be preferable as to not take away much from their specific courses of study.
 - This also led others to prefer a minor; it would not dilute their primary concentration while also adding more multidisciplinary engagement.
 - However, some students clearly stated that they would not want a more intensive program; it could possibly endanger student mental health, as well as take away the flexibility currently present in curriculum.
- Nomenclature was a particularly poignant issue; many students believed these names would be confusing.
 - Many students expressed concern over the difference between a minor and a certificate in all sessions.
 - Much of the nomenclature for a mixed concentration was similarly confusing; students would prefer if we realigned the program to be more similar to a “double” concentration, akin to a double major program at other universities.
- In one session, a handful of students raised that a mixed concentration or a minor program would provide students with program-specific resources that they otherwise could not access, such as course seat reservations, internships, funding, and prizes.
- Certificates were generally viewed ambivalently or negatively by students in some of the sessions.
 - Students thought most certificate programs lacked rigor and resources, and could not meet the baseline academic interests of the students.
 - Some students preferred to simply have a more immersive learning experience for their certificates than the current ones being offered.

Further Considerations

- How would the relationship between departments be facilitated? How would students navigate this relationship? Would the two departments/programs act entirely independently of each other? What forms of communication and collaboration might exist between faculty, advisors, and other resources?

¹ “Dilution” is the general term that we use to describe the reduction in the number of a department’s requirements and departmental courses to accommodate students. For example, in the History department, a student is responsible for the completion of 10 courses, six of which fulfill specific subject/geographic areas and four elective courses. A 60/40 model, for instance, might imagine the program cuts all electives and rolls back the number of requirements. A student, then, might be responsible for completing five courses for credit.

- The topic of independent work continues to be thorny. Students were relatively unsatisfied with our answers about what form(s) independent work would manifest in, so more thought needs to be given to the amount, forms, and scope of the independent work required for either proposal.
 - Ultimately, this issue might be something that is decided by the faculty of a given academic program rather than by us. If we are creating a template for the program, however, this area of concern is something that cannot be left out.

Next Steps

- It is important that we finalize the proposal so that we can move forward with the hopes of an estimated future date of implementation.
 - Currently, the minor proposal seems to be the most popular and pragmatic option. While many believed mixed concentrations are more interesting and serve a distinct purpose, many felt as if it was too confusing in its current form.
 - With that, it is also important to articulate the final terminology that will be used to describe our proposal. Mixed concentration, minor, 60/40, etc. have all been terms that have raised more questions than answers.
- Many students were concerned about the distinctions between a certificate and a minor. It is pertinent that we discern the difference, if there is one at all.
 - One potential avenue is to collapse the certificate programs into a revised “minor” program, which would make the nomenclature clearer to individuals within and beyond the Princeton community, while also allowing departments to host these programs.
 - Another potential avenue is to differentiate the two, as certificates would be “interdisciplinary” programs and minors would be “multidisciplinary” programs.
- If we continue down the path of mixed concentrations, dilution is perhaps the most important area of focus.
 - Most students voiced concerns about dilution as it would detract from their learning experience; if they do a mixed concentration, they want it to look like a double concentration—with the exception of double the independent work (i.e. two theses).
 - Dilution seemed to be less of a problem in relation to minors.
- Mixed concentrations, as a proposal, will definitely face an uphill battle; minors are likely preferred.

Acknowledgments

This project and report would not be possible without the help of multiple members of the Academics Committee, including Christian Potter ‘22, Bradley Phelps ‘22, Sarah Kuo ‘24, Yash Parikh ‘24, Olivia Cao ‘24, Srista Tripathi ‘25, Caroline Ji ‘25, Leena Memon ‘25, and Nolan Musslewhite ‘25.

--- Austin Davis, USG Academics Chair;
 prepared for the Committee on the Course of
 Study

Referendum Question No.

Princeton University Undergraduate Student Government Election—Spring 2022

Sponsored by PREETI CHEMITI '23

On November 21, 2021, the USG Senate approved the language of this condensation (ballot question) and referendum resolution as being clear and not claiming to exercise a power that cannot be exercised by an undergraduate referendum (___ members in favor, ___ members opposed, ___ members abstaining).

Condensation (Ballot Question)

Shall the undergraduates call on Trustees of Princeton University to encourage its faculty to publish mental health resources and information on syllabi?

Explanation (Submitted by the Sponsor)

The sponsor's explanation is due Sunday, November 14 and may be updated before that date.

Across the nation, collegiate institutions are experiencing a mental health crisis. Rates of mental health concerns among students have been steadily rising over the past decade, but the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges. Federal data shows a nationwide surge of depression, anxiety, and suicide rates during the pandemic – a surge that's further taxing on student populations like ours that are facing academic stressors. On Princeton's campus alone, Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) reported an all-time high in clinical appointments in March of 2020 with a record of 1,490 clinical appointments. In an effort to address student concerns, last April, CPS joined the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) and University Health Services (UHS) in signing a statement about prioritizing student mental health. Though such steps centered on administrative action are in the right direction, students continue to require heightened mental health support during this school year and beyond.

Faculty have an important role when it comes to supporting student mental health on campus: they are often seen as mentors, allies, and guides throughout a student's academic career. Including mental health messaging on syllabi will send positive signals of support for students' learning and well-being by including recommendations and encouragement for students to take care of themselves and seek help when they need it. For these reasons, it is imperative for faculty to know of Princeton's campus resources and share mental health information.

Far too often under the status quo, access to mental resources is decentralized, stigmatized, and unclear for students. Students' health ought to be a priority, especially at an institution as academically rigorous as Princeton. Passing a proposal to include mental health information on syllabi would drastically increase awareness of support networks, foster a culture of care, and encourage students who need help to reach out.

THE UNDERGRADUATES OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Princeton, New Jersey

Referendum Resolution 11-2021

Referendum Question No. (Spring 2022)

Sponsored by PREETI CHEMITI '23

Referendum Resolution

Calling on the Trustees of Princeton University to encourage its faculty to publish mental health resources and information on their student syllabi materials to encourage a community of care and seeking help.

Whereas Princeton University's "Health and Wellness" page considers that at Princeton, the administration "believe[s] in taking care of your whole self and have dedicated resources to sustaining and enhancing your physical, psychological and emotional health";

Whereas collegiate mental health rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide have steadily increased over the past two years, highlighting the long lasting repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic;

Whereas at Princeton, a record-high number of appointments were made with Counseling and Psychological (CPS) services last year;

Whereas administrative action can be greatly bolstered by demonstrating student support for increased visibility of mental health services and options for the student body; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the undergraduates of Princeton University,

SECTION 1. FACULTY, DEPARTMENT HEADS, AND ADMINISTRATION.

The undergraduates call on the Trustees of Princeton University to:

- (1) Encourage faculty members to publish the following mental health blurb within their syllabi:

"Princeton University wants to foster and uplift mental health, wellbeing, and accessibility resources for our students. We understand that various experiences can be distressing such as relationship struggles, ongoing loss associated with the pandemic, depression, anxiety, academic struggles, difficulty adjusting to college, relying on substances and alcohol, and identity changes. If you or someone you know needs support or is looking to access specific services, consider reaching out to these campus partners and student-led resources: If you want to learn more about access and possible accommodations for your time at Princeton, please contact the Office of Disability at 609-258-8840 or by e-mail at ods@princeton.edu.

If you are feeling distressed or need support, please contact CPS at 609.258.3141 for immediate support or to schedule an appointment with a counselor. CPS is a confidential resource.

The Sexual Harassment/Assault Advising, Resources and Education (SHARE) office is a survivor-centered, trauma-informed confidential resource on campus for the Princeton University community. Please contact SHARE (hyperlink <https://share.princeton.edu/>) at 609-258-3310.

The Princeton Peer Nightline is a student-run peer listening service. It is not affiliated with CPS or the University administration. They offer anonymous chat/call peer support.”

SECTION 2. USG SENATE

As per Section 708 of the Elections Handbook, the USG Senate will write a report that explains the official position of the undergraduates as stated in the referendum resolution. The report will include action steps for the Senate and recommendations for the administration to further the undergraduates' official position.. The report must be written and sent to the administration by no later than the start of Spring 2022 classes on January 24, 2022.

SECTION 3. TRANSMITTAL OF RESOLUTION

The Executive Secretary of the Senate shall transmit an official copy of this resolution to each of the following university officers:

- (1) Christopher L. Eisgruber '83, President of the University.
- (2) Jill Dolan, Dean of the College.
- (3) W. Rochelle Calhoun, Vice President for Campus Life.
- (4) Kathleen Deignan, Dean of Undergraduate Students.
- (5) Louise S. Sams '79, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Princeton University.
- (6) Professor Blair Schoene, Chair, Resources Committee of the Council of the Princeton University Community.
- (7) Dr. Calvin Chin, Director of Counseling and Psychological Services.
- (8) Dr. Anne Laurita, Project Manager of TigerWell.

BRAIN S. LI '24,
Chief Elections Manager

Attest:

JOSEPHINE KIM '23,
Executive Secretary of the Senate.

Referendum Question No. 2

Princeton University Undergraduate Student Government Election—Winter 2021

Sponsored by AUSTIN DAVIS '23

[Language about Senate Approval].

Condensation (Ballot Question)

Shall the undergraduates call on Princeton University to adopt a universal midterm grade reporting for all undergraduate course, as well as implement new TigerHub functionalities that permit instructors to leave comments that describe a student's academic performance at the midpoint of the semester?

Explanation (Submitted by the Sponsor)

The sponsor's explanation is due Sunday, November 14 and may be updated before that date.

The purpose of this referendum is to encourage the Office of the Dean of the College to adopt a universal midterm grade reporting policy for all undergraduate courses, as well as take steps to minimize the use of the “N” (“no-grade”) designation.

Currently, the Office of the Dean of the College mandates the instructors 100- and 200-level courses to report midterm grades by the Monday after the midterm break period.¹ Designed to help inform students' academic planning for the remainder of the given semester, this policy offers students the requisite information to readjust studying strategies; consult University academic advisors and resources; speak with their instructors about their academic performance, course expectations, and course grading; and/or elect a Pass/D/Fail option, among others.

This policy has two primary shortcomings. First, it does not cover students who take 300- and 400-level courses. Second, many instructors choose to elect the “N” designation, even in situations where they are mandated to input a grade. Thus, many undergraduate students do not have access to important academic information to help inform their decisions in the second half of the semester.

Enacting academic policy changes that amend these problems would serve to the benefit of the student body without substantially changing the workload of the faculty. In fact, these changes are aligned with existing recommendations from the Dean of the College to faculty on assignments and grading; namely, to “grade early and often” and to space out assignments out through the semester.² Thus, the Office of the Dean of the College should implement the outlined changes.

¹ “Conduct of Courses,” Office of the Registrar, last updated August 12, 2021, <https://registrar.princeton.edu/faculty-and-department-resources/examinations-and-grading/conduct-courses>, accessed September 30, 2021.

² Jill S. Dolan to the faculty, “Fall semester teaching and learning,” 12 August 2021.

THE UNDERGRADUATES OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Princeton, New Jersey

Referendum Resolution 6-2021 Referendum Question No. 2 (Winter 2021) Sponsored by AUSTIN DAVIS '23

Referendum Resolution

Calling on the Office of the Dean of the College under the advisory power to adopt a universal midterm grade reporting policy.

Whereas the Office of the Dean of the College already mandates the instructors of 100- and 200-level courses to report midterm grades by the Monday after the midterm break period;

Whereas this original policy supports students, particularly first- and second-years, with the requisite information to make important academic decisions after the midpoint of the semester in a prompt fashion;

Whereas instructors often leave an “N” (“no grade”) designation when inputting midterm grades, even when they are required to under the current policy;

Whereas the Office of the Dean of the College implements such policies to support undergraduate students’ academic success and meeting their needs;

Whereas the extension of such a policy would benefit a wider array of the student body, particularly those who are enrolled in 300- and 400- level courses;

Resolved by the undergraduates of Princeton University,

SECTION 1. FACULTY, DEPARTMENT HEADS, AND ADMINISTRATION.

The undergraduates call on the faculty and Office of the Dean of the College to:

- (1) Implement a universal midterm grade reporting policy that is extended to all undergraduate courses at the University.
- (2) Create a new TigerHub functionality that allows instructors to leave comments to explain or supplement a student’s midterm grade.
- (3) Prohibit instructors from leaving an “N” designation without also having to leave a comment describing a student’s academic performance.

SECTION 2. USG SENATE

As per Section 708 of the Elections Handbook, the USG Senate will write a report that explains the official position of the undergraduates as stated in the referendum resolution. The report will include action steps for the Senate and recommendations for the administration to further the undergraduates' official position.. The report must be written and sent to the administration by no later than the start of Spring 2022 classes on January 24, 2022.

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- (4) Kathleen Deignan, Dean of Undergraduate Students.
- (5) Polly Winfrey Griffin, University Registrar.
- (6) Claire Fowler, Senior Associate Dean of the College.

BRIAN LI '24,
Chief Elections Manager

Attest:

JOSEPHINE KIM '23,
Executive Secretary of the Senate.