Educational Policies Council
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, 21 January 2025
VIEW THE MEETING

Leadership present: Chair Edward Dauterich; Secretaries Therese E. Tillett, Joanna Liedel, Jennifer S. Kellogg, Amy Nuesch, Christa N. Ord, Kristi M. Kamis

Administrators present: Interim Associate Provost Scott C. Sheridan; Deans Peggy Shadduck, Deborah F. Spake

Faculty present: Professors Alan A. Brandyberry, Karen Gracy, Robert D. Jewell, Athena Salaba, J K. Vick; Associate Professors Brian R. Barber, Michael J. Ensley, Michael R. Fisch, Samuel Kim, Bethany G. Lanese, Abe G. Osbourne, JD Ponder, Pamela L. Stephenson, Jonathan F. Swoboda; Assistant Professors Tinyuan Guan, Yuening Zhang; Senior Lecturer Tracy A. Laux; Associate Lecturer Shelley K. Marshall; Lecturer Olivia B. Krise

Faculty not present: Professors Richard L. Mangrum, Steven N. Rugare; Assistant Professor Christopher W. Totten; Lecturer Lisa M. Davis

Students present: Lisa Onyao

Guests: David Alenquer, Mandy Anderson, Michael Beam, Christina Burnworth, Alicia Crowe, Chris Dorsten, Susan Emens, James Hannon, Paul Hurley, Amirhossein Jabbari, Ebone Jones, Chia-Ling Kuo, Kelsen LaBerge, Emily Metzgar, Tracey Motter, Paul Hurley, Christa Porter, Amy Reynolds, Gretchen Rinnert, Matthew Rollyson, David Silva, Hollie Simpson, Alison Smith, Kathy Spicer, Sharon Wohl, Dong Whi Yoo, Yin Zhang, Melissa Zullo

Chair Dauterich called the meeting to order at 3:20p.m., on Tuesday, 21 January 2025, via Microsoft Teams.

I. Approval of Minutes
A. Meeting on 16 December 2024
Associate Lecturer Marshall made a motion to approve, and Professor Salaba seconded the motion.

Chair Dauterich requested a correction to the fourth paragraph removing a "4" in between the word "discusses."

With no other comments or corrections, the minutes passed unanimously.

II. Program Proposals Review
A. Action Items
College of Applied and Technical Studies
1. eBusiness – Undergraduate Certificate—Suspend admission (*spring* 2025); inactivate certificate (*fall 2025*)
VIEW THE DISCUSSION
Associate Dean Emens explained that the college voted to suspend admission for spring 2025 and inactivate for fall 2025. The certificate has had zero to low enrollment over the past several years. The business management technology faculty reviewed it and rather than revise it, they felt they could serve the needs of the students in other ways with their certificates and associate degree. It will not affect any students or faculty.

With no questions or comments, the item passed unanimously.

College of Communication and Information
School of Emerging Media and Technology/School of Visual Communication Design
2. User Experience Design – B.S.—Establish major to be offered at Kent Campus (*fall 2025*)
School of Information / School of Visual Communication Design
3. User Experience Design – Minor—Revise program oversight to be jointly administered, instead, by School of Emerging Media and Technology and School of Visual Communication Design; revise outcomes, course requirements, roadmap (*fall 2025*)
VIEW THE DISCUSSION
Chair Dauterich suggested these items could be voted on as a slate.

Professor Rinnert stated that the User Experience Design minor was established in 2017. She suggested that a major being started by beginning with a minor. It started with 18 credit hours with 12 credit hours that were from the core. During the academic year of 2021-2022, Professor Rinnert worked on the first version of a major. It was originally presented at EPC in May of 2022. After feedback was received, it was indicated that user experience design (UXD) combined skills are currently being taught by the School of Visual Communication Design (VCD) and the School of Emerging Media and Technology (EMAT). Most VCD undergraduate students that choose a UXD minor are from the schools of VCD and EMAT. This comprises 94% of UXD students. Most VCD undergraduate students (16%) and EMAT undergraduate students (29%) who opt for a minor choose UXD. UXD jobs are growing at a very fast rate. In Ohio, the job change for UXD between 2017 to 2022 was a 43.8% increase. The in-demand skills are a mix of design and technology. All top skills (JavaScript, Cascading Style Sheets, User Experience, Hypertext Markup Language and Front-End Software Engineering) are covered by courses currently taught in VCD and EMAT. The Lightcast report indicated that UXD minor will attract new students in and around the area and possibly transfer students from neighboring universities. The learning outcomes reflect the industry needs and combine conceptual and technical problem-solving skills and design and technology. All of the courses required for the program are currently being offered in VCD and EMAT. No new courses are being created. Course revisions and updates are expected as time goes on. However, the framework and structure are already in place. External support for the proposal comes from Microsoft, Progressive, Goodyear and Safelite. Internal support comes from Communication Studies, Media and Journalism, Art, Computer Science, Information Systems and Business Analytics and Animation Game Design.

Professor Gracy read a statement written in conjunction with the faculty members from the School of Information (iSchool). In the statement, the school requests reconsideration of these programs; specifically, their names. The iSchool has offered the Master of Science in UXD since 2018. After 20+ years of offering an academic program in this area, the school has built significant experience in the field and have a solid track record of collaborating across related disciplines. The school was surprised to learn that, despite the established expertise, the proposals were developed without the school's consultation. While the school has a number of concerns about the proposals, their main concerns are the major and minor names. The school believes the appropriate name should be User Interface Design rather than User Experience Design. The concerns have been communicated to VCD and EMAT but have not seen them satisfactorily addressed. The school believes that, down the line, the inaccurate names will create problems for Kent State students and the institution. They argue that there is a crucial distinction between user experience and user interface (UI). UI being a subset of user experience (UX). The industry recognizes these as distinct disciplines with overlapping but different career paths and skill requirements. This distinction matters for educational programs, because UI focus programs primarily teach visual and interactive design skills. UX programs cover broader topics like research methods, cognitive psychology and collaboration and agile development environments. Students need to understand which career path they are preparing for. This distinction between UI and UX also matters for industry, because companies often have separate roles for UI and UX designers and salary expectations and career trajectories can differ significantly. Clear program names help students plan their educational and career pathways and represent themselves accurately in the job market. The iSchool suggests that the proposed curricula of the minor and the major offer excellent preparation in UI design. By naming them user experience design, however, this may mislead students about the depth and scope of their career preparation. It may create confusion for students when navigating the job market. Additionally, it diminishes Kent State's competitive advantage in offering clearly differentiated undergraduate and graduate pathways.

Associate Professor Fisch made a motion to approve, and Associate Lecturer Marshall seconded the motion.

Senior Lecturer Laux asked for a response from those submitting the proposal as to why there is an issue with changing the name.

Professor Rinnert explained that the iSchool has a misunderstanding of what is taught in the program. She said they do cover a lot of the material the iSchool said they are not covering. Professor Rinnert said they do cover cognitive psychology, human computer interaction, agile programming and workflows and backend research. It is not just based on the interface. It is much more about the background research on developing those products and services. Seeing it as interface design is very limited to the scope of the program.

Assistant Professor Silva added that there was a claim made that the work was done over the summer without faculty consultation. However, these conversations began a couple years ago. Members who have been teaching UX have been contributing through this. Over the summer, more discussions happened when faculty were not on contract, but within the School of Emerging Media and Technology, all of the faculty who have been teaching, including iSchool and UX program, have been contributing. In the EMAT faculty meeting, there was a rich discussion about the UX and UI distinction. A vote was taken and there still stands disagreement,

but the vote to keep the name as it is among the faculty who are teaching these courses maintained the UX name.

Professor Rinnert reminded everyone that they received external and internal support and all approved both the proposal and the name. The program has been taking advice, and this has taken years to put forward.

Senior Lecturer Laux asked if the program name and the conflict was discussed with internal and external support.

Professor Rinnert said yes. The name and the conflict were discussed. The program is going to be overseen and accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

Professor Salaba said it was a surprise that the minor was first brought to the iSchool in September when the minor was co-created and offered by the iSchool and VCD. She asked for clarification on the decision not to include one of the co-creators of the program; the iSchool.

Professor Rinnert explained that the faculty in the iSchool are currently teaching in EMAT as well. It actually is a clarification and removing some of the redundancies. One of the examples is the user experience introductory course that had a lot of overlap with human computer interaction. The students were saying in their surveys that a lot of the information was being duplicated. By only offering the EMAT course, the redundancy is being removed. Not that the iSchool faculty are not being included. They are involved and in partnership within EMAT and being at EMAT's FAC.

Dean Reynolds added that some of the confusion may have come from her. A few years ago, multiple faculty across the schools shared that the introductory course was relied on too heavily to serve a broad range of students, and it might not have met everyone's needs. An ad hoc group of faculty was created and there were some disagreements in that process. Then it was paused. In August and September, she incorrectly told Karen, Kathy and others that they were not planning on having the minor discussions because she did not think they needed to do that. Dean Reynolds said she knew some of the disagreements were halting the ability for the minor to move forward. The college heard from Curriculum Services that the major and minor needed to go together. Once she got that clarification, that is when she came to a curriculum committee meeting to help clarify. Some of the confusion may have come from a misstatement that they did not need to work on the minor in tandem. They tried to correct that very quickly so that this process could continue to move forward.

Associate Professor Smith said that the existence of the minor is not the problem for the iSchool. The important idea is that they have been teaching user experience design. She said they were asked to remove the word "design" from their program since they do not do visual design in the master's. It would also no longer be required to go under NASAD accreditation process. The reason that works is because UXD does not always include VCD. VCD and graphic design are user interface or user interaction design. They are not the same thing as user experience design which covers a much broader set of things which can be touched on in an undergraduate degree. However, the master's degree has different information in it. The iSchool is focused on research rather than the user. So, there is a difference between user experience design with the word "experience" being the fulcrum around which the concept resides. User interface design or

interaction design is the actual interface. She said she would argue that the degree and the minor are focused on the products and not the user. The iSchool has no problem with the minor other than it should have a clear distinction between what is taught at the master's level and what is taught at the undergraduate level. The school believes there is a strong argument to be made that students coming from Kent State with an undergraduate degree in UI and master's degree in UX walk away with a clearly differentiated set of skills and background in education with a much stronger position in the marketplace. When someone is doing an undergraduate in UX, they may walk away without a clear understanding of the full breadth and importance of the different concepts that are involved in UX that are extremely user focused which is very different a product-focused view of things. The usability class is taken out of minor and undergraduate major. The school is very concerned that someone could graduate with a degree in user experience with no class in usability, which is a very underlying, fundamental principle in user experience design. There is also no introduction class to user experience. Students need to at least get an intro class where they understand what it is.

Director Beam stated that they have discussed the program name at length. With review of job titles and the understanding that the master's degree and the bachelor's degree are at clearly different levels, the entry level roles for a bachelor's degree are called "user experience design." That is the title or division. People who wrote support letters, their titles include "user experience." User experience is the field or discipline, and user interface is a subdiscipline. This is a major that does touch on all of things in the discipline. A combined degree pathway for the B.S. and M.S. was agreed on unanimously. Both VCD and EMAT go into the M.S. in UX. Which they hope will create more continuity between the programs. Director Beam stated that they do have a course in the proposal that was revised which is "Technology, Experience, Design and Society." Part of that class is introducing the role of user experience design (UXD) talking about the different subfields in UXD. Usability is central and important. It has been discussed in several meetings with VCD, EMAT and the iSchool. Three classes were revised to introduce, practice and reinforce usability. There is no disagreement that usability is central to the profession, but that it has been thought through and included in the curriculum.

Chair Dauterich explained that the council could vote on the items, table them or introduce a friendly amendment.

With no comments, Chair Dauterich asked for a vote on the items.

The items passed with one nay and two abstentions.

College of the Arts
School of Theatre and Dance
4. Theatre Design, Technology and Production – Minor—Establish minor (*fall 2025*)
5. Theatre Management – Minor—Inactivate minor (*fall 2025*)
6. Theatre Sound – Minor—Inactivate minor (*fall 2025*)
7. Theatre Studies – Minor—Establish minor (*fall 2025*)
VIEW THE DISCUSSION
Chair Dauterich suggested these items could be voted on as a slate.

Associate Professor Hurley stated that currently, in the School of Theatre and Dance, there are eight different theatre minors on the Kent Campus. The school found, in recent years, that more

than half of the minors are not being pursued by students. The school is looking to reduce the eight minors down to three. The proposals are to inactivate Theatre Management and Theatre Sound. The school will propose to inactivate Theatre and Social Change, Scene Design, Scenic Technology, Costume Design and Technology and Lighting Design and Technology at a later time. As a result, the school is going to offer three focused minors in theatre. They will encapsulate what the other seven minors offer. Additionally, the school is proposing to reduce credit hours from 21 to 14-15 credits. The changes are designed to create a more streamlined and focused approach and to align with the university's desire to have a minor between 12-20 credits. It will also better align with accreditation standards. All of courses in all three minors are offered in the School of Theatre and Dance, are revenue positive, they optimize curriculum delivery and improve cost efficiency.

Associate Professor Swoboda motioned to approve, and Associate Professor Fisch seconded the motion.

Associate Dean Wohl said with consideration of T28 and how colleges may work together in the future, she asked if some of the minors the school is inactivating, if those might be of interest to a larger population of students.

Associate Professor Hurley replied that some of them are design focused specifically in their area. Additionally, the school found that to get the degree of training needed, they cannot offer the classes anymore. While the minors could be reimagined with collaboration, at this point, there is a time when they will not be able to be offered, and students are not there for those minors.

Associate Professor Swoboda added that the minors are notoriously under enrolled. The school found that industry design, technology and production are becoming more homogenized. Students are looking for opportunities that are encompassed in the new minors.

With no further questions, comments or concerns, the items passed unanimously.

With no further questions, comments or concerns about items on the agenda, Chair Dauterich concluded the meeting at 4:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Christa N. Ord

Christa N. Ord
Operations and Special Projects Coordinator, Curriculum Services
Office of the Provost