

PREP Program

The subcommittee believes that focus on retention begins with PREP. To enhance the PREP experience, fostering and promoting academic success should begin with PREP. A change in the culture that is established when the freshmen first come to ULM at PREP is needed. Currently, heavy emphasis is placed on student life and school spirit. While these are important, a balanced message between academic success and campus involvement is important in conveying the proper expectations to the students.

We ask the following recommendations be made to the PREP organizers:

1. During PREP, include student leaders from that college, not just faculty, in the college session to impart academic wisdom to freshmen.
2. During PREP sessions and in PREP promotional media, an equal balance of promoting a message of academic success, as well as promoting involvement in campus life, should be achieved.
3. Facebook pages for each PREP session can be created where postings can be made periodically throughout the summer and into the Fall semester. This can act as another means of communication. Facebook is an easy way of notifying students, in addition to emailing.
4. Majors' Facebook pages can be created and incoming freshmen (as well as current majors) can be encouraged to join them at PREP. A faculty member from each major should actively monitor their major's page. These pages can be used throughout the year as a means of interaction with all of their majors and can foster a sense of community.
5. All students at PREP need to be advised to check their schedules on ARROW the night before classes for the most current version of their schedule including room changes. They need to know this happens and they are responsible for checking their updated schedule. Reminder emails need to be sent the Monday before classes begin, the Friday before classes begin, and the Sunday before classes begin. Postings on the PREP Facebook pages are also recommended. Knowing where to go and not having to go from building to building following the "moved classes" signs can help alleviate Day 1 stress.
6. As an extension of PREP, on the Friday afternoon before classes begin (or possibly Sunday afternoon before classes), each college or major should host a welcome social/meeting for incoming freshman in their college or major. The agenda should include a "meet the faculty and your advisor," "what to expect day 1," schedule check for room changes and canceled classes, and provide help those whose classes were canceled last minute. This will be an opportunity for many incoming majors to meet their advisor for the first time. Student can even

visit the buildings to locate their classes. Invitations can be presented, in person by the advisors at PREP, with follow up reminders mailed, emailed and posted on the various majors' and PREP Facebook pages.

These recommendations cannot be carried out without faculty involvement. Faculty committed to implementing these suggestions will be actively working towards retention for the University. Faculty involvement will be a service to their department, their college and the University and faculty need to be given credit for their actions. Perhaps a PREP Faculty Involvement Committee could be created to work with the PREP staff to incorporate these suggestions and implement post-PREP activities.

Change of Major

In order to ensure that students considering a change of curriculum (major) receive effective advising and counseling before submitting a Change of Curriculum Form, this committee recommends that the current university policy shown below be modified.

Current University Policy (ULM 2009-2010 Undergraduate Catalog, p. 63)

CHANGES OF CURRICULA/CATALOG

After their first registration, students will not be permitted to change curricula except on the advice and consent of the academic deans of their new college. A Change of Curriculum Request form must be used, and the proposed change is not official until the required approval has been obtained and the slip has been filed in the Registrar's Office. Once the Change of Curriculum Request Form is on file in the Registrar's Office, the change becomes effective immediately. The new catalog year will be the catalog

year in effect when the change is submitted. The student will be subject to regulations of the new catalog.

Proposed Revision to Current University Policy

CHANGES OF CURRICULA/CATALOG

After their first registration, students will not be permitted to change curricula except on the advice and consent of the academic deans of their new college, **and with the approval and signature of their current advisor or a Student Success Center Counselor.** A Change of Curriculum Request form **must be signed by the student's current advisor or a Student Success Center Counselor**, and the proposed change is not official until the required approval

has been obtained and the slip has been filed in the Registrar's Office. Once the Change of Curriculum Request Form is on file in the Registrar's Office, the change becomes effective immediately. The new catalog year will be the catalog year in effect when the change is submitted. The student will be subject to regulations of the new catalog.

Justification

It is the belief of this committee that many students who change majors do so without adequate advising and/or counseling. Students often see a change of major as an escape from a particular course or barrier exam which prevents them from advancing in their current degree plan. Rather than explore the various forms of assistance available to them, they simply change majors. These students frequently encounter the same academic issues in their new major that plagued them in their previous major. Our proposal seeks to ensure that students who change majors fully understand their reasons for doing so, and that this decision is made under the guidance of an advisor or Student Success Center Counselor.

University College or Junior Division

Rationale

Incoming freshmen often declare a major without much real consideration. Some are programmed from a young age to be doctors, lawyers, pharmacists etc. Often, they have no real understanding of the commitment and requirements that their chosen discipline demands. Many struggle through introductory and sophomore classes in their chosen major, yet they continue to hold unrealistic expectation of success.

We believe students who labor along a major they are obviously not suited for will eventually come to that realization, and often leave school. They may not 'want to start over' by switching to a new major late into their academic career, while some, we contend, may not return if they fail in their originally declared major.

We envision a system that promotes exploration across disciplines and does not attempt to label students with a major too early in their early academic career. A system that still caters to a strong student's pre-collegiate interests, yet it is flexible enough to allow weaker students or students, who may not be so sure about their potential field of study, to explore academic disciplines without the pressure of selecting a major and the following stigma of 'changing the major.'

Under this proposal, students would be advised within the current college advising structure. No need to restructure advising if we follow already existing disciplinary tracts.

Each department can set their own admission standards to the major (i.e. a grade of C or better in the specified courses, and/or a minimum GPA , or both)

Admission into the Major should be coupled with a college wide or departmental function acknowledging their achievement

Recommendation

To be inserted in the ULM *Catalog* in the section on University Regulations between Course Drop and Resignation and Changes of Curricula/Catalog

Beginning freshmen students will declare a Discipline Track of Interest [in place of a major course of study]. Non-traditional students, transfer students who have earned more than 20 hours of credit will be allowed to declare a major course of study.

Students will be advised according to the chosen track by faculty familiar with degree requirements and job opportunities. Students will be encouraged to explore other disciplines before officially declaring a major.

When a student has earned a minimum of 30 hours exclusive of developmental courses, he will make an application to the program of his choice. Each program will specify admission requirements which are published in the Catalog along with degree requirements. Applications will be due by the fifth day of the semester. College/department representatives will review the applications and make recommendations for acceptance. Once decisions have been made applicants will be notified and encouraged to complete the next step in the process.

- Students who are accepted will complete a change of curriculum form to officially declare his major course of study.
- Students who are not accepted will meet with the academic dean to determine the next course of action.

Advising

The sub-committee acknowledges the importance of good advising to keep a student on track toward academic success.

Recommendation

We ask the UPC to make the following recommendations to Academic Deans:

- 1) Each student should be assigned a permanent advisor as soon as he enrolls at ULM. Only in unforeseen circumstances, or at the request of the student, should the advisor assignment be changed.
- 2) Advisor assignments should be kept current in ARROW and Flightpath.
- 3) Shortly before the advising period begins each semester a brief training/refresher program should be held for faculty who will be advising. Topics to be reviewed should include 1) prerequisites for English/Math/Science courses; 2) changes in degree requirements or academic policies that have occurred since the previous

catalog; 3) expected course offerings for the upcoming academic year including summer and mini-sessions.

- 4) An advisor interview assignment should be included in the UNIV 101 syllabus.
- 5) Degree plan information in Flightpath should be kept current. For transfer students communication should be clear about substitutions that are being allowed.
- 6) Advisors should be encouraged to create a means of “social networking” with their advisees through a Moodle class or a Facebook page.

Withdrawing from Classes

The subcommittee recommends a charge for each withdrawal a student processes during his academic career. Responsibility and accountability for one’s education and academic progress belongs to the student. Allowing students to have an unlimited number of withdrawals on his transcript without repercussions is academically unsound.

Current policy as stated in the 2009-2010 ULM Catalog:

COURSE DROP AND RESIGNATION POLICY

After enrolling in classes, (in most cases on the web), a student who wishes to resign from the University must (a) drop to “0” hours on-line on the dates and times specified in the Registration Schedule Calendar or (b) notify the Registrar’s Office in writing [by letter or fax] of his/her wish to resign.

Students may drop courses or resign (when class load drops to zero hours) from the institution with grades of “W” prior to a date specified in the official University Calendar. That date is generally three weeks after midsemester in a regular semester and the equivalent period in a summer session. (Actual drop/resign dates are published in each calendar for the respective schedule of classes.) After that specified date, students may not drop a course or resign. Drop dates for short courses will vary depending on the length of the course; these dates are published in the current issue of the Schedule of Classes.

Students who have extraordinary cases with extenuating circumstances may submit a letter of appeal to their academic dean, along with documentation to substantiate the case. Extraordinary cases do not include dissatisfaction with an anticipated grade or the decision to change a major. Approval of an appeal for dropping a course or resigning after the published date may be granted by the student’s dean for reasons stated below and only if the reason can be officially documented to show direct due cause. If approval to drop a course is granted, the student must also have been passing the course immediately prior to the hardship, and must have applied for the approval immediately after the hardship or illness ended. The grade assigned shall be a “W.” If the dean allows the student to resign, a “W” grade shall be assigned in all courses. If the appeal is approved, the dean will notify the instructor and the Registrar. Examples of appealable cases are as follows:

1. *Illness/Injury—The student must provide a letter on official stationery from the attending physician stating that the illness or injury will render the student unable to complete the course, or will cause the student to miss a significant number of days so as to make it difficult to complete the course. A hospital bill may also be used.*
2. *Death of an immediate family member which caused undue hardship and renders the student incapable of completing the course—The student must provide a copy of the death certificate, obituary stating relationship to the deceased, or letter from the attending clergy.*
3. *Natural disaster or exceptional traumatic event (documentation will be required)—The student must provide a written explanation of extenuating circumstances providing this event causes the student undue hardships.*
4. *National Defense—The student must provide a copy of official military orders.*

Grades of “F” will be assigned to students who do not complete the enrollment period and who have not officially dropped their courses or resign. An appeal for a change in official academic records must be made no later than 30 days after the end of the semester or term in which the alleged error in academic records occurred.

Recommended changes to the ULM Catalog:

Course Drop and Resignation Policy

To avoid schedule changes after the official registration period, students are encouraged to plan each semester's course work in consultation with academic advisors. Any schedule changes should be made as soon as possible after the beginning of classes.

Students may make changes to their schedule through the first week of classes (for full-term classes*) without receiving a grade of “W.” A “W” grade will be entered on a student's record for any course dropped between the sixth class day and the final date for resigning from the University and/or dropping courses. Students should consult the academic calendar to determine deadlines each semester/session.

A student will be charged a fee of \$25 for each class dropped after the period allowed for making schedule changes.

Students may drop all courses by resigning from the University according to the guidelines in the Course Drop and Resignation section of the *ULM Catalog*. Students who resign from the University will not be charged.

* Separate calendars for schedule changes are published for 8-week mini sessions, Wintersession, and May Intersession.