Course and Curriculum Database Concept

The Problem
At UNC Charlotte we have developed well-meaning processes and systems for managing our curriculum – the efficiency and utility of which have been lessened as the institution has grown and become more complex. Processes for course and curriculum approvals, catalog publication and maintenance, and class registration are overly-complex, incredibly time-intensive, and unnecessarily paper-driven. The following problems have developed as a result of our current systems:

- *Inaccurate and inconsistent quality of information* – Information for degree program requirements and course descriptions is kept in many places, by many people, with the opportunity for much human error. For example, it was for this reason that the Academic Plan of Study template was created.
- *Delays and inefficiency* – Many people physically handle the documents associated with the course, curriculum, and catalog processes, and at each step there is an element of delay as paper processes make their way through the system. It is also difficult to determine where a particular request lies within the approval queue in order to adhere to external deadlines and plan accordingly.
- *Duplication of effort* – Units continue to develop shadow systems and internal mechanisms for managing the process, adding an additional layer of unnecessary duplication.
- *Paper-intensive* – The course and curriculum approval process and undergraduate and graduate catalog all rely on an entirely paper-driven process that is cumbersome and complicated.
- *Lack of synthesized information* – The lack of integration between course descriptions in the catalog and the student registration system makes the registration process more complicated for students.
- *Lack of historical record and accountability* – Currently there is no systematic way to determine when changes to a course or degree program occurred, or who authorized the change.
- *No reporting and data analysis capabilities* – Currently there are no reporting or data analysis capabilities associated with our course and degree planning process.
- *Faculty and staff workload burden* – In addition to the two staff members in Academic Affairs and the four staff members in the Office of Registrar that manage these existing processes centrally, Faculty Council curriculum committee members, department chairs, and staff in each of the colleges spend considerable time managing the paper process, routing procedures, and keeping track of their particular items along the way.

Proposed Solution
The proposal is for an electronic academic program and course approval system for creating, modifying, and accessing degree programs, individual courses, and catalog information. Such a system would include:

- *A comprehensive database* to include all courses and degree requirements, providing one location to house all course and curriculum information. The database would allow all changes and updates to the curriculum to happen in one location. The system would hold all course descriptions, when courses are offered, the historical record of changes to each course,

and the requirements needed to complete each undergraduate and degree program offered (the Academic Plan of Study template).

- *A web-based approval system* that would automatically route all course and curriculum approvals including: new programs, changes to existing programs, new courses, changes to existing courses, and catalog changes.
- ***Integration of course descriptions with student registration systems*** in Banner, allowing live course description information to be available for students, faculty, advisors and staff; in effect creating a one stop shop for course descriptions and registration.
- ***Integration of course and degree information with the undergraduate and graduate catalogs***. Data from the system including degree requirements, course descriptions, and other information would be automatically generated for display in the online catalog or downloaded as needed for pdf catalog versions.
- ***Integration with Academic Plans of Study***. Information about course-taking and degree requirements would be aggregated to assist students in planning their four years and graduating in a timely manner. Data from the system would be automatically generated for display in the Academic Plans of Study when changes to the curriculum are made.

Consultation and Support

Initial consultation may include the following constituencies:
- Provost
- Associate Vice Provost
- Associate Deans
- Deans Council
- Faculty Council: President, President-Elect
- Faculty Academic Policy and Standards Committee: Chair
- Undergraduate Course and Curriculum Committee: Chair
- Graduate Council: Chair, Secretary
- Graduate School
- AAIT
- OASES
- Institutional Research

To undertake this project, extensive consultation and close work with departments, colleges, and administrative units across campus would be necessary. To that end, a planning team would be formed consisting of representation from each college as well as from relevant Faculty Council standing committees and academic administration.

Conclusion

An electronic academic program and course approval system would allow faculty, departments, colleges, and staff the ability to access, edit, and propose changes to curriculum in a simple, efficient way. The database would track all requests and edits from the originator all the way through the administrative approval process to the catalog, class schedule, Academic Plan of Study, and relevant websites where it would feed the necessary information. A course and curriculum database would significantly improve efficiency and workloads as well as protect the academic core of the institution by maintaining an accurate account of all course offerings and degree programs.