



## Committee Charge Letter

### Guiding Principle 2: Achieve Curricular Coherence

The vision for *One Penn State 2025* builds on our strong traditions of working as one university to provide world-class education and drives us to be a more integrated, flexible, and responsive institution. By 2025, seamless online access to curricula and processes will be embedded in every part of Penn State across the Commonwealth, enabling us to become a 24/7/365, diverse and inclusive institution. *One Penn State 2025* represents a fluid, personalized, and collaborative environment that enables students, faculty, and staff to achieve their goals regardless of their location in the world.

This vision for One Penn State 2025 will be advanced by five guiding principles and you are invited to serve on a joint University Faculty Senate and Administrative University committee that will focus attention to the second of these principles—To Achieve Curricular Coherence. A resonant vision of transforming education, one of the priority themes of the University’s Strategic Plan, is the ongoing commitment to a shared and coherent curriculum accessed through multiple modes of delivery. The transformation of education as a strategic priority emboldens the University to further develop “a curriculum that integrate[s] multiple modes of delivery while leveraging online capabilities and enhanced and emerging digital learning options…” and “...a culture and curriculum that facilitates the ability of students to seamlessly access courses across resident, online, and blended instructional models.”

Underlying this principle is the goal that “In 2025 Penn State will embrace a commitment to design degree, minor, and certificate programs that provide students with access and articulated pathways through the curriculum, built through thoughtful approaches to course coherence. Strong disciplinary and interdisciplinary communities and multiple and flexible models of course-taking will form the basis of this transformation.” (*One Penn State 2025: Vision and Guiding Principles*, Information Report for the Faculty Senate, April 23, 2019.)

*One Penn State 2025* presents a timely opportunity to reaffirm the University’s hallmark commitment to a shared and coherent curriculum and its founding tenet of seamless pathways. The University community has promoted curriculum integrity, creating policies and review processes that keep curricular integrity in the fore of academic program planning. Faculty Senate policy 42-10 states that “Despite possible variation in pedagogical style, course materials, delivery mode or location, courses offered within Penn State must include a minimum of 80% of the core content and learning objectives described in the most current course proposal as approved by the Faculty Senate.” This ensures that a Penn State course is a Penn State course no matter where or how a student is enrolled. Other efforts have successfully unified course abbreviations and provided access to undergraduate academic minors and certificates University-wide. These initiatives have brought greater clarity to the course selection process, increased

access to academic offerings across the University and created a sense of shared faculty ownership within academic disciplines. Yet useful integration work remains, and *One Penn State 2025* provides a propitious opportunity to mitigate practices that infringe on our students' ability to transition seamlessly by articulating clear pathways across current programs and finding new approaches to achieving curriculum coherence in future program development.

The University is well positioned to deliver a timely and rigorous curriculum that is not bound by location or the resources of any one unit of the University and that makes full use of the strength of the entire faculty. To achieve this, we must create models of undergraduate and graduate curriculum development and delivery that builds coherence and unity and is accessible through multiple modes of delivery, online, hybrid and in residence. In addition, we must develop an approach to curriculum development and delivery that is responsive to the University's ongoing commitment to access and affordability, student success, diversity, excellence, innovation, and flexibility.

We are asking this leadership committee to undertake the work toward achieving curricular coherence through attention to both immediate and longer-term efforts. The scope of work encompassed in this guiding principle is broad and will require coordination with existing University Faculty Senate committees. The leadership committee may wish to subdivide its work and organize smaller teams to address the following:

- Identifying where undergraduate and graduate policies and processes erect barriers to access and seamless pathways to degree completion,
- Developing metrics that reflect the severity of these barriers to facilitate the development of strategic ways to address and mitigate barriers,
- Developing curricular guidelines that take into account student pathways, enabling fluid student mobility and undergraduate degree completion in four years,
- Identifying a process to articulate seamless student pathways among shared and closely aligned undergraduate and graduate degree programs currently offered throughout the University,
- Establishing a process to create, maintain and engage University-wide disciplinary and interdisciplinary communities to which faculty will have membership regardless of their particular campus and college affiliation, and through which unified undergraduate and graduate curricula can be planned and developed. Empowering these communities to engage in curriculum development will allow expanded conversations/consultations to occur early and throughout the development and review processes,
- Developing a process for selecting critical courses for online University-wide delivery in conjunction with the development of new academic programs; developing a concurrent process for sharing course content in conjunction with the development of new academic programs,
- Developing approaches that provide needed University-wide infrastructure in learning and instructional design.

In addition to providing coordination across the issues, this leadership team will report progress to the *One Penn State 2025* Executive Committee and, on an annual basis, to the Chair of the University Faculty Senate. The leadership team will work with the executive committee to develop a timeline, establish milestones and priorities, and monitor and communicate progress so that by 2025 we will have policies, practices and processes identified that support a coherent

Penn State curriculum, a model of curriculum development that builds on the strengths of all members of the Penn State faculty, and strengthens our commitment to access and affordability, seamless pathways, student success, diversity, innovation, and flexibility.

Finally, each guiding principle leadership team will incorporate as part of their work the identification of infrastructure requirements that are needed to support the achievement of the guiding principle. In this context, infrastructure refers to administrative policies and practices, facilities, budget models, and technology platforms to facilitate faculty and staff collaboration, student access to university resources, and student success. Coordination of infrastructure needs will occur through the joint assignment of leadership team members with the Guiding Principle 5 leadership team.