



Faculty Council Meeting  
Monday, Feb 3, 2025, 1:00-3:00 PM  
Chancellor's Conference Room  
Third Floor, Quinn Administration Building  
<https://www.umb.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-council/>

## Agenda

Supporting documents may be found in the February meetings folder: [2-2025 February Meeting Documents](#)

To access these documents, you must be signed into your UMB account.

I. Motion to approve the Agenda

II. Motion to approve the December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024 Meeting Minutes and the December 9<sup>th</sup> 2024 Meeting Minutes

III. Motion to approve Dr. Qian Song, Gerontology Department, Manning College of Nursing and Health Sciences, to the General Education Distribution Subcommittee. For the most recent list of Standing Committee members, please see: .  
Send any updates or corrections to [faculty.council@umb.edu](mailto:faculty.council@umb.edu).

IV. Motions from the Graduate Studies Committee (**See Appendix A below**)

V. Review elections deadlines; Review open seats; Nominations from the floor for election committee

VI. Motion for Revised Policy of Placement Testing in Mathematics (**See Appendix B below**)

VII. Discussion of previously circulated reports from administrators:

- Chancellor - Marcelo Suárez-Orozco
- Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs – Joseph Berger
- Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance – Kathleen Kirleis

VIII. Discussion of previously circulated reports from student government:

- Representatives from the Graduate Student Government
- Representatives from the Undergraduate Student Government – Julia Olszewski, Vice President

IX. Discussion of previously circulated reports from union representatives:

- Classified Staff University Representative - Alexa MacPherson, CSU President
- Professional Staff Union Representative - Michael Mahan
- Faculty Staff Union Representative - Caroline Coscia, FSU President
- Representatives from the Graduate Employee Organization – Jonathan Vega Martinez

X. Curriculog Updates, Issues, Concerns

XI. New Business

XII. Motion to Adjourn

## Appendix A

GSC Motions for February 3, 2025 FC Meeting

All materials available for review on Curriculog

### Motion #1

**From: CLA**

**Request for a course change:** to change the short course title of SOCIOL 604 Classical Sociological Theory from Classic Social Theory to Classical Theory and to change the description, in order to update the course description and correct a typo in the short course title.

**Old description:** Classical social theory is a required introductory course for graduate students in the Sociology Department. You will study the work of major canonical theorists, such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber ("the Big Three"), as well as other early theorists who are key to contemporary applied sociology, such as Harriet Martineau and W.E.B Du Bois. Upon completing the requirements for this course, you can expect not only to have a solid knowledge of classical sociological theorists but also a critical insight into sociology as a discipline. We will discuss how "the canon" of sociological theory was and continues to be constructed and its influence on contemporary scholarship.

**New description:** Classical Sociological Theory asks us to grapple with big questions about how our social world is organized and how it might be organized in the future to create a fairer world. Some of the questions the theorists in this course wrestle with include: What is modernity? What is progress? What utopic social order should we be working towards? What are the forms and consequences of the racial, gendered, and class-based division of labor? We will study the work of canonical theorists, such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, as well as other early theorists who are also key to contemporary thought, such as Harriet Martineau, W.E.B Du Bois and others who theorized race and gender. Upon completing the requirements for this course, you can expect not only to have a solid knowledge of classical sociological theory but also a critical insight into sociology as a discipline. We will discuss how "the canon" of sociological theory was and continues to be constructed and its influence on contemporary scholarship.

### Motion #2

**From: CEHD**

**Request for program changes:** to streamline the courses in the Counseling and School Psychology (PhD) - Counseling Psychology Track to cover professional standards and competencies and to update the catalog listing. Please see details in Curriculog, especially the *Table of Counseling Psychology Plan of Study changes 2023 11-25-24* document. In particular, 3 required courses would change to being electives (COUNSL 615, CSP 713, CSP 752) and additional options would be allowed for students to fulfill competencies by choosing between two or more course offerings; one new course, CSP 781 Internal Practicum (already approved), would be added for 12 total credits (6 credits/semester x 2 semesters), to provide internal practicum training and supervision on campus in the UMB Counseling Center; at least 4 semesters of external practicum would be required; and the program would require an applied master's degree with supervised clinical experience for admission.

**Rationale:** These changes are requested due to (1) updated program curriculum during self-assessment for an upcoming American Psychological Association Accreditation review; (2) to correct an error in the catalog that stated "Complete one of the following" when all courses in that section were required, as well as an error about the capstone (a capstone was never required).

None of these changes negatively impact the curriculum or instruction or student experience. 9 credits have been removed from courses no longer required; 12 credits were added for the Internal Practicum course in which students are completing clinical practice in the UMB Counseling Center. Students will continue to exceed the minimum required 73 credits of courses (108 total credits of courses are listed, but up to 36 can be waived since students may have had comparable courses in their master's program).

### Motion #3

## **From: SGISD**

**Request for a course change:** to change GISD 898 Transdisciplinary Research to Practice Group to a one-semester only course, which impacts the doctoral plan of study. Students are required to take the course for one semester (rather than two); and instead of being able to repeat for credit up to four times/12 credits, they can only take the course once for 3 credits. Instead of a year-long course to allow students to conduct a research study prior to working on their dissertations, the course will now focus on dissertation preparation to better prepare students for the GISD Comprehensive Exams (now integrated within the dissertation proposal) and their dissertation preparation, including the GISD 899 dissertation seminar typically taken post-898. This shift around the comps process is also indicated within the program change also being submitted through Curriculog (see Motion #4). Students will continue to learn the principles of Transdisciplinary-based Research (as in the previous iteration of the course) for application in their dissertation studies.

**Old description:** Students will engage in mentored independent research for up to 4 semesters (12 credits) with a transdisciplinary research to practice group. This research practicum will be an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in their core and elective coursework to real-life research settings. Specifically, students will join a research group for one to two years. Each student will either be affiliated with one of the ICI's research or practice activities or with the research team of a faculty member associated with the school. A student may also be paired with a faculty member engaged in relevant research or practice activities in another department at UMass Boston, a related institution of higher education affiliated with the school, or a related research center in another country.

**New description:** The Transdisciplinary Research to Practice seminar will build the research knowledge foundation as well as give students an opportunity to apply what they have learned in their core and elective coursework to real-life research settings. The aim is twofold: to prepare students to conduct and embed principles of transdisciplinarity in their own dissertation research, and to develop leaders in global inclusion and social development who understand the relevance of research and the importance of translating research to practice.

## **Motion #4**

### **From: SGISD**

**Request for program changes** to the Global Inclusion and Social Development (PhD) - Post-Masters Option:

**1) Previously approved changes:** Previously approved changes (see 2021-22 APCA on Curriculog) to the GISD PhD curriculum were not reflected in the graduate catalog. These changes are now being put into the Curriculog curriculum schema to carry into the graduate catalog. These changes, already approved through governance in 2021-22, are: GISD 606 replaced with GISD 602 for core coursework; GISD 801 and 802 no longer required; GISD 803 now required for core coursework; quantitative research course added to advanced electives requirement.

### **New changes:**

**2)** Students will now be required to take GISD 898 Transdisciplinary Research to Practice Group for only one semester/3 credits instead of 2 semesters. The course will be aligned to more robustly support students to prepare for transdisciplinary research in their dissertation proposals (inclusive of new comprehensive statement) and to prepare for GISD 899 seminar. This change to the course is currently going through governance (see Motion #3).

The total number of credits required for the degree will not change. The 6 credits freed up by replacing 801 and 802 in the required courses with 803 and reducing 898 to one semester will be replaced with electives, making 6 elective courses total. Three of these courses must be research electives, with one of the research electives being quantitative.

**3)** the comprehensive exam process will now be linked to the dissertation proposal development process rather than the former exam format. Students will write a comprehensive statement that links core concepts and content with students' area of research; this is woven into students' dissertation proposals and evaluated as part of the dissertation proposal process during dissertation seminar. This allows for better application for students and outcomes associated with the comprehensive assessment of knowledge.

## **Motion #5**

### **From: CLA**

Request for a course change, to change the total number of credits of PSYDBS 690 Mentored Research allowed from 24 to 30 credits. The number of completions of the course allowed remains at 24. Course may be 1-9 credits each time it is taken.

Description: This course provides the mechanism through which students will receive credit while conducting pre-doctoral research. The student will be individually supervised and mentored by his or her advisor during the design and execution of an original Mentored Research Project.

Rationale: A proportion of students in the Developmental Brain Sciences PhD require more mentored research hours to maintain their full-time student status than currently permitted. The change is for all students to be able to maintain full-time status/maintain their stipends. The program is truly a 5-year program rather than a 4-year.

#### **Motion #6**

##### **From: CLA**

Request for a course change, to change the total number of credits of PSYDBS 899 Dissertation Research allowed from 27 to 30 credits. The number of completions of the course allowed remains at 12. Course may be 1-12 credits each time it is taken.

Description: This course allows students to register for required dissertation credits towards the PhD in Developmental and Brain Sciences.

Rationale: A proportion of students in the Developmental Brain Sciences PhD require more dissertation research hours to maintain their full-time student status than currently permitted. The change is for all students to be able to maintain full-time status/maintain their stipends. The program is truly a 5-year program rather than a 4-year.

### **Appendix B**

#### **Motion for Revised Policy of Placement Testing in Mathematics**

By: Nelson Lande, CLA, Maxim Olchanyi, CSM, and Nurit Haspel, CSM

The Faculty Council finds that the present system of unproctored placement testing in mathematics has proven to be unreliable, and is unacceptable going forward.

The Faculty Council finds that immediate action is required to prevent further harm to the educational outcomes of our students. Further delay, after years of inaction, is intolerable.

The Faculty Council insists that the Provost begin working immediately with the Mathematics Department and other affected departments, to establish a placement testing policy and procedure that is validated as reliable by the Mathematics Department, as reported by the department Chair, and that is acceptable to affected departments, as reported by their Chairs.

The Faculty Council recommends, as strongly as possible, the immediate implementation of the following action items:

- a. The University shall immediately require that second and further repeat attempts by students on mathematics placement tests will be accepted by the Registrar only for tests administered on campus and proctored in person by faculty or staff.
- b. The University shall immediately establish a policy that placement test attempts by any student who has previously attempted the related mathematics course will be accepted by the Registrar only after the attempt has been approved by the Mathematics Department Chair or the Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics.
- c. The University shall immediately announce that, in relation to all courses in Fall Semester of 2025 and thereafter, mathematics placement tests shall be accepted by the Registrar only when such tests follow reliable procedures validated by the Mathematics Department, in accordance with this policy finding of the Faculty Council.
- d. The Provost shall immediately consult with the relevant department Chairs to establish a joint program and calendar for planning and implementing a reliable placement testing procedure to be available to students before the end of the Spring Semester of 2025, in accordance with the findings and policy of this Council, with the understanding that new

policy and procedure will evolve going forward, in collaboration with the Mathematics Department (in lead) and in coordination with other departments as needed.

## **Background and Chronology**

**Preamble:** The current mathematical placement test (that determines the point of entry in the mathematical sequence) makes no effort to verify the identity of the student, and it makes no attempt to prevent students from using books, notes, web searches, or even friends and family to improve their score beyond their actual knowledge level. Additionally, many students who place into a low-level course and receive a grade that is insufficient to move to the next level, retake the placement test to place directly into a higher level-course; there, they typically have little chance to succeeding. Much evidence collected from our campus and beyond indicates that the current placement system is not accurately placing students into their first math course, and it is setting up a large number of students for terminal failure as a result.

**Background:** A detailed account of the Math Department's efforts to increase the validity and security of the math placement exam has been provided in the report titled "Known Obstacles to Student Success in Math at UMass Boston" (attached). This report was distributed to Faculty Council in advance of the October 2023 meeting and the December 2024 meeting. In brief, the current math placement system used at UMass Boston allows students to take the placement exam at home, as many times as they like, with no proctor, and with no safeguards for the integrity or security of the assessment.

Support for proctored placement has long been endorsed by the Math Department, the CSM Senate, all CSM Department Chairs, countless CSM faculty, the previous Provost, the Board of Higher Education, and our accrediting institution: New England Commission of Higher Education. Documentation for this support has been provided in the aforementioned "Known Obstacles..." report. As detailed therein, UMass Boston is currently in violation of the Board of Higher Education policy, and it is in violation of NECHE Standard 5.5 (which states in part that "The institution utilizes appropriate methods of evaluation to assess student readiness for collegiate study...") and NECHE Standard 4.44 (which states that "The institution works to prevent cheating and plagiarism as well as to deal forthrightly with any instances in which they occur. It works systematically to ensure an environment supportive of academic integrity.").

This policy of placement testing in mathematics directly impacts the educational process of all the colleges and schools of the University. The Faculty Council, representing the entire University faculty, is greatly concerned, since this academic policy is clearly one with respect to which the faculty has primary responsibility:

"By virtue of its professional preparation and its central concern with learning and teaching the faculty will exercise primary responsibility in such academic matters as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, admissions, libraries, and other aspects of University life which directly relate to the educational process. Students share this concern, and they will be assured the opportunity of participating in developing academic policies and in evaluating degrees, programs, and courses." (University Of Massachusetts Board Of Trustees Statement Of University Governance (Doc. T73-098, as amended))

The severity of the current situation has been clearly communicated to the provost on multiple occasions over the past three years and eleven months. Some of these occasions are detailed in the December 2024 Faculty Council meeting documents. However, the Provost continues to delay the implementation of a proctored placement policy, knowingly setting many students up for failure.

Here is a detailed chronology of the events:

When Provost Berger assumed his position in early 2021, he immediately reversed the decision to implement proctored placement that had been previously approved by the entire chain of governance, including the former Provost. He never provided a satisfactory and clear explanation for his reasoning despite multiple requests from the faculty, nor did he make any plans to implement proctoring until recently.

When the campus reopened after the COVID restrictions were lifted in Fall 2021, it was announced that the testing center was not going to reopen in its former capacity. There was no plan to implement proctored placement on campus or remotely.

In March 2022, the CSM Senate Executive Committee met with the Provost and with the VP for Academic Support Services (later SEAS) Liya Escalera. During the meeting the senate leaders attempted to convey the severity of the situation, clearly and in no uncertain terms. In response, the Provost provided several reasons why proctoring is not implemented, including "disparate impacts" and the lack of budget; he however did not identify a reason for the delay in finding

alternatives. Subsequently, the Provost and the CSM Senate ExCom made tentative plans to meet again and discuss the issue in detail, but no such meeting ever took place: the Provost never replied to multiple emails from the CSM Senate members requesting a follow-up meeting. In the meantime, *AY 21-22 came and went and our students continued to suffer the devastating effects of misplacement.*

In October 2022 the Provost's office started IESSM, the initiative for enhancing student success in math. During the first year of the initiative's meetings, it was clear that there were two obstacles that stood in the way of moving forward:

- e. The Provost's team, consisting of Liya Escalera and Andrew Perumal, often delayed meetings, failed to upload needed documents and often did not reply to emails requesting feedback and comments.
- f. The initiative was full of vague and performative jargon (see document 06 from the December 2024 FC meeting), and it was clear that the Provost's office had a different agenda than that of the CSM faculty. Specifically, despite the fact that the urgent need for proctored placement was clearly communicated to the Provost's team multiple times, it became clear that proctored placement would only be implemented as part of a more *comprehensive* and *holistic* plan that included "revised curricular offering" and "innovative pedagogies" but with few precise criteria being specified.

Due to inefficiency and miscommunication, the first year of IESSM ended without significant results, except for the gathering of some documents and initial discussions. *AY 22-23 came and went and our students continued to suffer the devastating effects of misplacement.*

In October 2023, the FC presented a motion requesting the implementation of proctored math placement. The Provost replied in December 2023 and mentioned proctoring for the first time (see documents in the December 2024 FC meeting). However, he reiterated his intent to only implement proctoring as part of a "comprehensive" and "holistic" plan that included, among other things, "Revised curricular offerings that include a more student-centered, active learning approach" and "Regular coordination meetings involving department leadership to track the delivery of instruction and support across all sections in key math courses and success of students". This vague and uninformative language can mean anything and everything and therefore can be used by the administration to delay or halt the implementation of proctoring without explanation until some vague, ill-defined and arbitrary criteria are satisfied.

In parallel, IESSM continued to operate through a smaller subcommittee, consisting of three faculty members from CSM who were supposed to directly communicate with the Provost (by that time Liya Escalera had departed from UMass Boston). According to the participants, communication with the Provost was nearly impossible since he almost never replied to multiple emails requesting feedback and information. In particular, he never explained what exactly he meant by "comprehensive" and "holistic" curricular offerings.

On April 9, 2024, the Math Department compiled a comprehensive report on the IESSM. The report outlined many of the problems discussed here, including a point-by-point answer to the Provost's memo from December 2023, which showed that some of the items requested by the Provost as part of his comprehensive plan already exist: many instructors already practice active learning and flipped classrooms. Some items such as allocating TA lines to the Math Department and expanding the Tanimoto learning center require resources, and suggestions about pedagogical and curricular changes require careful consideration with respect to academic freedom. The Provost acknowledged reception of the report and told the Math department chair that he would schedule an appointment to discuss the issues. He never did. In the meantime, *AY 23-24 came and went and our students continued to suffer the devastating effects of misplacement.*

In Fall 2024 the Provost told the CSM senate that he intended to implement a pilot proctoring for a subset of students who need to place into Math 140 (calculus 1). By the end of the Fall 2024 semester, absolutely no details were given about the nature of the pilot (online or on campus), the details of the budget, or who the contact person would be in the administration. Even though the provost hinted that the CSM should figure the details out and carry out the implementation, he still insists on implementing proctoring as part of a "*comprehensive*" and "*holistic*" plan for student success. Thus, the CSM now has to figure out all the minute details on its own, whereas the Provost still reserves the right to implement "curricular revisions".

At the FC meeting on Dec. 2, 2024, the details of the situation were presented in full to the FC. At that meeting, the Provost would not give a direct yes or no answer to the simple question of whether he supported proctored math placement; he continued to insist that it would only be implemented as a part of a "*comprehensive*" and "*holistic*" plan.

At present (January 2025), we are stuck in a deadlock, for the most part. The Provost refuses to implement proctored placement without a "*comprehensive*" and "*holistic*" plan that includes changes to our curriculum and pedagogy. On the

other hand, he does not specify what he understands by “comprehensive and holistic changes.” and how they differ from what the Math Department already implements. At the same time, he fails to reply to emails, and he doesn’t engage with the faculty on the issue - apart from making vague replies to the Faculty Council’s October 2023 motion. There has been some communication between the Provost’s office and CSM during the Fall semester and the winter break, but there is no active effort to create an acceptable plan, much less implement a new policy. As a result, the “*comprehensive*” and “*holistic*” plan is delayed, together with proctoring.