

Provost's Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Programs Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2026

The January 20, 2026, meeting minutes were circulated with the April 21, 2026, agenda for review.

Academic Program Proposals

Establish an Undergraduate Certificate in Human Factors Engineering in the Swanson School of Engineering

The Swanson School of Engineering proposed to establish a 15-credit Undergraduate Certificate in Human Factors Engineering. The certificate was originally developed by Dr. Joel Haight (now retired) and is now managed by Dr. Karen Bursic. The certificate is aimed primarily at engineering fields but is also appropriate for students in computer science, information science, rehabilitation science, and psychology. Students complete one foundation course (IE 1061 - Human Factors Engineering, required by ABET for Industrial Engineering) and then select two courses from a cognitive domain (psychology and information science courses) and two courses from a physical domain (bioengineering, computer science, and industrial engineering safety courses). The foundation course includes a project requirement providing real-world experience. All courses already exist and letters of support have been provided from all departments. The Swanson School currently hosts 11 undergraduate certificates.

The program addresses the need for engineering students to learn how to design usable products and systems that meet genuine user needs, rather than treating the human user as an afterthought. The program anticipates enrolling approximately 10 students in the first year. Some prerequisite restrictions will be lifted for non-Industrial Engineering students when the certificate is approved. The certificate complements various degree programs including Digital Narrative and Interactive Design, particularly on the cognitive side, and aligns well with advances in AI from a biomechanics perspective.

PACUP reached consensus to recommend this proposal to the Provost.

Establish a major in Health Informatics leading to the Bachelor of Science degree (modality – online) in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

The School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences proposed to establish an online major in Health Informatics leading to the Bachelor of Science degree. An in-person version of this major already exists and is nationally accredited at the undergraduate level as the first of its kind. The online program will use the same curriculum as the in-person program, delivered mostly asynchronously, and will be included under the existing accreditation.

This will be the first fully online upper-division health informatics program of its kind in the country. Students complete a required internship (120 hours) with dedicated faculty support for placement and oversight, and a capstone project (90 hours) that can be external or research-based with a faculty member.

The program will primarily target transfer students who already have an associate degree, particularly working professionals in health information management and community college graduates. SHRS is partnering with Pitt EDGE and the School of Computing and Information to build the infrastructure, and all online courses are being developed from the ground up with professional instructional designers. The school has experience with online master's programs and is implementing a comprehensive support structure including student success coaches, a team-based approach between faculty and advisors, responsive communication standards (48-hour email response), and weekend/off-hour meeting times for working professionals. Prerequisite coursework can be completed at community colleges as part of a degree completion pathway. The program anticipates enrolling 10 students in the first year with minimal risk to in-person enrollment and overall program growth expected. Online and in-person cohorts will remain separate, with case-by-case permissions for cross-enrollment while maintaining appropriate tuition structures based on program enrollment.

PACUP discussion raised questions about the difference between teaching online asynchronous programs to graduate versus undergraduate populations, the structure of support systems for undergraduate online populations, managing student permissions between online and in-person courses, and ensuring proper cohort tracking and enrollment requisites. The school has built dedicated faculty, advisor, and support coach positions into the plan and budget, ready to hire as needed.

PACUP reached consensus to recommend this proposal to the Provost.

Establish a Clinical Research Certificate for Undergraduate Students (modality – online) in the School of Medicine - Institute for Clinical Research Education

The School of Medicine Institute for Clinical Research Education (ICRE) proposed to establish an online Clinical Research Certificate for undergraduate students. This will be the first undergraduate credential from the School of Medicine and builds upon existing training in ICRE. Pitt will be one of the first universities to offer an undergraduate program in clinical research (Duke and University of Rochester offer majors; Penn State offers a certificate). The program will be fully online combining asynchronous and synchronous components within each course. The five required courses are being created with draft syllabi completed for all except one, and instructors have agreed to teach the courses.

ICER will allow substitution of similar courses from other schools toward the certificate and is working to make it an honors certificate.

The program prepares students to start careers as clinical research coordinators or IRB professionals, both experiencing workforce shortages. Students will gain hands-on experience through a Scientific Communication course (where they write and present on research they are involved in or assigned) and an Application and Synthesis Lab course (where they complete products such as IRB applications, research protocols, or scientific presentations). The program anticipates students will declare the certificate in their junior year, though motivated sophomores may also participate. There are no prerequisites for the courses. ICER has office staff experienced with managing undergraduate students and is partnering with the Pre-Health Resource Center for advising and graduation certification. Lauren Zielinski and Shawna Clites will work with the Office of the University Registrar on administrative support.

On February 27, 2026, course syllabi were circulated to PACUP via email with a request for any concerns to be submitted by close of business on March 6, 2026. No responses were received.

PACUP reached consensus to recommend this proposal to the Provost.

Presentations

Draft Syllabus Statement on Well-Being and Academic Success

Dr. Michael Davila, Executive Associate Dean and Chief Wellness Officer in the Division of Student Affairs, presented draft syllabus statements on well-being and academic success. The presentation covered objectives related to holistic, positive and proactive approaches to wellness and well-being, including awareness and accessibility of resources and crisis care. A recommended well-being statement and a shortened well-being statement were provided. The statements were also presented to the Senate Education Policies Committee and modified according to their suggestions. The goal is to have the statement available for summer syllabi. The University Counseling Center offers walk-in hours for students needing immediate support. Dr. Davila will work with regional campus representatives to create appropriate landing pages and adjust language (such as noting that re.solve Crisis Network serves only Allegheny County) for regional campus contexts while maintaining 24/7 support information.

Updated Curriculog Forms

The presentation by Paula Janikowski on Updated Curriculog Forms was tabled until the March 17, 2026 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Attendance

Members Attending: Mary Besterfield-Sacre (SSOE), Brian Batell (Dietrich – Natural Sciences), Betty Braxter (SON), Luke Condra (SPIA), Lorraine Denman (Dietrich – Humanities), Ryan Felesky (UPJ – student), William Garrison (SCI), Deborah Good (CBA), Brandon Grace (Pittsburgh SGB – student), Adriana Helbig (Dietrich School – CGS), Jonathan Helm (Office of the University Registrar), David Hornyak (Frederick Honors College), Paula Janikowski (OTP – Staff), Logan Johnson (UPG), Toya Jones (SSW), Kathy Kelly (SHRS), Adam Lee (OTP – PACUP Chair), Michelle Sobolak (SOE), Sybil Streeter (SEPC), Belkys Torres (OTP), Liann Tsoukas (Dietrich – Social Sciences), Kelly Wagner (DenMed), Ada Youk (SPH)

Members Absent: Jonathan Chitiyo (UPB/UPT), Dawn Drahnak (UPJ), Kylie Engdahl (UPB/UPT), Matthew Miscio (UPG – student), Denise Schiff (Pharm)

Guests: Dr. Karen Bursic (Professor, Undergraduate Program Director in Industrial Engineering, Swanson School of Engineering), Dr. David C. Beck (Professor and Dean (Interim) School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences), Dr. Bambang Parmanto (Professor and Chair, Department of Information Management, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences), Dr. Dilhari DeAlmeida (Vice Chair for Education, Director of the Health Informatics (BS) Program and Professor, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences), Dr. Gretchen White (Assistant Professor of Medicine, School of Medicine, and Faculty in the Institute for Clinical Research Education), Dr. Michael Davila (Executive Associate Dean and Chief Wellness Officer, Division of Student Affairs)