

Portland State University (PSU) Faculty Senate Motion  
5 June 2023

## Accept transfer credit to fulfill University Studies Upper-Division Cluster requirements

### Motion presented by the University Studies Council (USC)

Effective Fall 2023, 1) allow courses (non-PSU) that directly articulate to junior cluster courses to articulate with the cluster designation (i.e., 300U courses) and apply to the cluster requirement, and 2) allow students to petition to transfer upper-division courses from other four-year institutions to PSU to meet cluster requirements (i.e., 300U courses).

### Background and preliminary discussions

- These motions are one part of a multi-year conversation about upper-division clusters that started last year in the USC and will continue over the next few years (2021 - present). Outcomes of this process include the USC support of the Academic Requirements Committee (ARC) proposal, whereby a Senate-approved motion (at the March Senate meeting) to allow four, interdisciplinary majors to use "extra" courses from their majors toward the junior cluster requirement; and the USC's motion to allow undergraduate majors in the proposed, augmented elementary education degree of the College of Education to use 12 credits of Initial Teacher Preparation (ITP) 300U education courses to satisfy the junior cluster requirement. This exemption addresses the curricular impact of the 2 + 2 dual admittance agreements with the Metro community colleges, especially in regards to terminal, undergraduate degrees.
- In their recent report submitted to PSU, the external peer reviewers of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities noted the Junior Cluster requirement as an area of concern:
  - "There was widespread agreement that the Junior Cluster is a potential barrier for transfer students. For example, transfer students who are required to enroll in the Junior Cluster may experience excess credits, redundant coursework, and increased time to degree." (2022, October)
- Per the Registrar's Office, in the last year, students transferred 1088 upper-division courses. 135 had discrete course numbers, with the rest being generic 'UD'. Of those, 23 showed up as a possible cluster course match (i.e., the course matched a discrete numbered course on a Cluster list, but without the U.) 112 courses matched discrete numbered courses but were not on the cluster list.

### Rationale for Motions

- Pt. 1 Seeks to assist transfer students who may have taken courses that PSU already articulates to existing upper-division cluster courses.

- Pt. 2 Seeks to clarify and make clear an existing option. However, not all students understand the petition process. This helps make clear what the option is and how to access it.

Attached:


Budget Committee statement

ARC Statement

**MEMO**

Date: April 26, 2023

To: Pronoy Rai, UNST Council  
Kimberly Willson, Chair UNST Council

From: Suwako Watanabe, Chair, ARC  


Dear Pronoy,

I am writing this memo to inform you that the Academic Requirements Committee reviewed your proposal to modify the UNST Junior Cluster requirement and support the proposal. We agree that the proposed change to recognize transfer courses with “U” designation will help PSU students complete degree requirements in a timely manner. We also appreciate the additional language to indicate that a petition process is available for students to appeal that courses transferred from another four-year institution meet the Cluster requirement. Since a large proportion of our students are transfer and first-generation college students, the changes will make PSU an institution that serves such students more effectively. We appreciate the work that you and the UNST Council have done to meet the needs of our students in completing the general education requirements.

To: Faculty Senate Steering & UNST Council

From: The FS Budget Committee

RE: Clusters ARC Proposal

The faculty senate budget committee met with Pronoy Rai, Subcommittee Chair of the Reimagining Junior-level General Education Requirements of the University Studies Council, and Kim Willson-St.Clair, Chair of the University Studies Council on May 1, 2023. They presented a proposal regarding a motion to formalize student ability to transfer upper-division courses and empower departments to use articulation agreements to count external courses toward the cluster requirement, while allowing the consideration of student petitions. We discussed the financial impacts both to students and to the University. After a lengthy discussion on the number of students this may impact, the complexity of the current processes in place, and the equity for students to understand the avenues towards petition processes and degree completion, it is felt this change will have minimal financial impact.

The Faculty Senate Budget committee recognizes this change will lower barriers for a minimal number of students.