Preliminary Response to "Proposed Policy on Changes to Prerequisites" (5/1/2025)

Background

The UAPPC received the following charge via email ton 2/5/25:

To: Faculty Senate, PA Senate, Union, Student Government

From: FDU's Governance Steering Council

Date: February 5, 2025

Re: Proposed Policy on Changes to Prerequisites

The Governance Steering Council reviewed a proposal from a student regarding the possibility of limiting changes to prerequisites in order to prevent the creation of unexpected obstacles to student progress toward degree.

We have reviewed the proposal and have concluded that it is appropriate for our University to have such a policy. We charge the University Academic Planning and Policy Council (UAPPC, which consists of the members of the Faculty Senate APRC with additional representation from the PAS, Union, and Student Government, and is led by the chair and deputy chair of the APRC), to review the following question and propose an answer:

At what points in the year may a department, school, or college change the prerequisites for a course it teaches, and with what notice to students of said change?

Should there be any limits to the freedom of a department, school, or college to change prerequisites?

We ask for the UAPPC to address this question with a level 2 analysis (see https://www.fdu.edu/sharedgovernance/structure/ for more information), although the members of the UAPPC are of course free to investigate relevant practices and policies at other institutions if they wish to do so, and submit their proposal to the GSC by May 1,2025.

Sincerely,

Matthieu Boyd, Co-Chair of the Governance Steering Council and

Benjamin Rifkin, Co-Chair of the Governance Steering Council

As per https://www.fdu.edu/sharedgovernance/structure/, the **Level 2 analysis** called for in the above charge is defined as follows:

Level 2 (mid-level): Members of the committee or council discuss and develop a preliminary response, present it to the relevant governance stakeholder bodies (defined below) for feedback (as specified in the charge from GSC), revise the response accordingly, and submit to the GSC; The governance stakeholder bodies are: for the faculty, the Faculty Senate; for the non-Union staff – the Professional Administrative Senate; for the Union employees – the Union; for the students – Student Government; for alumni – the Alumni Advisory Councils.

Definitions

Requisites include both **pre-requisites** and **co-requisites**. Both may include "grade gates."

Pre-Requisite: A pre-requisite is a course or number of credits that must be successfully completed prior to being allowed to start on a course.

Co-Requisite: A co-requisite is a course that a student can complete prior to, or at the same time as, the course for which it is listed as a co-requisite.

Findings

The Course Authorization Form (CAF) is online at Enrollment Services at https://www.fdu.edu/about/university-leadership-offices/office-of-enrollment-services/authorization-forms/ (also see form at the end of this document). The CAF is used for the following three purposes:

Section 1: New course proposal

Section 2: Course revision

Section 3: Course inactivation

The charge from Shared Governance regarding a policy on the timing of changes to pre-requisites involves only **Section 2: Course Revision**. Furthermore, the course revisions relevant to the issue at hand are limited to the following:

  a. Adding or removing existing courses in the academic program as requisites
  b. Re-sequencing existing requisites in the academic program
  c. Changing grade gates for existing requisites in the academic program

Note that changes in prerequisites leading to *additional courses* in a program are considered changes in a major and not under consideration here.

As per Enrollment Services and MIS, current practice is as follows: When CAFs are submitted, all changes (whether Section 1, Section 2, or Section 3) are made at the course level immediately (as soon as the CAF is processed). The change is made on the check sheet, in Degree Audit, and in the Course Catalog. Right now, whenever a pre-req is changed for an existing course, it affects every single student taking that course going forward, regardless of when that student started the program or where they are in their program (i.e., even if a pre-req for a course was not in place in the catalog year in which the student entered). There is not a way in our system to code the changes to tie them to specific entering cohorts or catalog years. The only way to indicate that changes would apply only to specific entering cohorts would be to add a note to the course in the Course Catalog.

General Counsel indicated that while the Bulletin has a disclaimer regarding possible updates and changes after the date of publication, it is important to establish and adhere to written best practices regarding the changes to requisites (timing, approvals) and identification of students impacted by changed requisites.

The proposal put forth to the Governance Steering Council (GSC) from a student suggests *limiting changes to pre-requisites in order to prevent the creation of unexpected obstacles to student progress toward degree*. This proposal was prompted by a situation in which a pre-req for a course was changed at the start of the spring

semester after students were already registered (and before add/drop), and the school required those students who didn't have the pre-req to drop the course, even though doing so would delay graduation for those students (the issue was eventually resolved with intervention from the Provost's office and assistance from Financial Aid to cover the cost of the course in the summer for those students).

Recommendations

These recommendations will prevent the creation of frequent and/or unexpected changes for existing course pre- or co-requisites (or grade gates) that may impede student progress to degree. The recommendations will also ensure that Degree Audit managers have time to enter all changes into Degree Audit for the appropriate catalog year and that academic advisors have adequate time to be informed of the check sheet changes and adjust student planning accordingly.

Proposed Policy:

Requisites are defined as pre-requisites and co-requisites. Both may include "grade gates." A pre-requisite is a course that must be successfully completed prior to being allowed to start on the next course. A co-requisite is a course that a student can complete prior to, or at the same time as, the course for which it is listed as a co-requisite. The following types of requisite changes are governed by this policy: a) Adding or removing courses in the academic program as requisites, b) Re-sequencing existing requisites in the academic program, and/or c) Changing grade gates for existing requisites in the academic program.

Changes to requisites, *with the exception of removal of requisites or adding alternatives to existing requisites,* will only be processed once a year. The deadline to submit Course Authorization Forms (CAFs) with changes to requisites is May 1 of each calendar year (or the last business day before May 1 if that date falls on a weekend). Changes submitted by the May deadline will be made for the following Fall term. CAFs that involve only the *removal* of requisites may be processed at any point in the academic year.

Changes submitted by the May deadline will apply to all new students in the following Fall entering class. The following current students are ***exempt*** from the changed requisites: a) current students who will be seniors the following Fall, and b) current students whose timeline toward degree completion would be extended, as determined by the academic program (department chair) in collaboration, as necessary, with the academic advisors for the program.

Note: If changes to requisites are necessitated by external accreditation and/or state/federal requirements, and those changes must be implemented in a timeframe not in accordance with this policy, the academic program may request an exception to this policy from the Office of the Provost.

Proposed Best Practices:

Prior to the change of requisites, the chair of the department is encouraged to communicate the intent to change requisites with academic advisors for the program in order ensure that the advisors are aware that the requisites will be changing and can help students plan accordingly.

A copy of the completed CAF, as well as the updated check sheet, should be routed to the Directors of CAASS to ensure the academic advisors are aware of the change.

After requisite changes have been made in the system, students impacted by the change should be alerted.

Proposed Changes to the CAF:

In "Section 2. Course Revisions":

1. Add an "effective semester" field.
2. Add the following items to the options to check for type of revision: co-requisite, pre-requisite (any grade gates should be noted as a pre-requisite).

Routing:

3. Add the Directors of the Center for Academic Advising and Student Success (CAASS) to those who should receive a copy of the completed CAF.