




UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM CHANGE MEMO

Date: February 28, 2024

From: Drs. Soyeon Lee  and Levi Martin , English Department

Through: Dr. Joe Ortiz, English Department Chair 

Through: Dean Bencomo, College of Liberal Arts

To: Dr. Selfa Chew-Melendez, Chair, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

Proposal Title: RWS Courses as Block Electives Options

Explain the nature of the change and the rationale.

The Department of English proposes that Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS) Program's four Technical Writing and User Experience (TWUX) courses be counted as Block Electives for non-TWUX majors in the College of Liberal Arts: RWS 3305 Intro to Technical Writing and User Experience, RWS 3354 Methods for Inquiry & Design, RWS 3367 Foundations of User Experience, and RWS 4320 Web Authoring.

User Experience (UX), often defined as users' engagement with technological services and products, increasingly requires humanities, critical inquiry, and digital writing research methods intersected with other disciplines. If the four courses above can be approved to be counted as Block Electives, all majors in the College of Liberal Arts, not just TWUX majors, can benefit from these Block Electives options (under Humanities Category) in three ways:

- 1) These elective options will help students visualize their Technical Writing and UX research and design abilities and skills on their transcripts and resumes as part of their coursework/course projects. These options will benefit students by enabling them to achieve their job placement and professional career goals. As described, UX research and design are increasingly sought skills as highly impactful competencies across industries and integrated into multiple professional arenas including but not limited to technical and professional writing, healthcare, content development, government, and non-profit organization areas.
- 2) These courses are aligned with College of Liberal Arts' current emphasis on "high-impact practices" ("College of Liberal Arts," [n.d.](#)). If open to students in the College of Liberal Arts as Block Electives, these four courses can help students engage in high-impact practices, such as community engagement, internships, and capstone projects, which are important UTEP EDGE activities emphasized by the College of Liberal Arts, in their majors. Technical Writing and UX research and design relevant courses offer experiential learning options that can be extended to high-impact practices.

- 3) The inclusion of the four courses will promote the University's Strategic Plan, as one of the leading Hispanic-serving institutions, focusing on “access to excellent higher education” and specifically Strategies 1.3, 4.1, and 4.2 (“2030 Strategic Plan Executive Summary,” [2021](#), p. 7) by providing students with career-oriented learning options: “transform the student experience through increased engagement that fosters success from the first day on campus through graduation and job placement” (1.3); “advance the development and application of knowledge to improve higher education” (4.1); and “expand leadership roles...for underrepresented and minority students” (4.2). These four courses, based on collaborative project-based inquiry and practical applications of UX principles, align with strategies for “access to excellent higher education” and will help students demonstrate their professional writing and leadership abilities.

The four courses listed on the proposal for Block Electives inclusion are the following:

Prefix Number	Title	Descriptions	Credit Hours
RWS 3305	Intro to Technical Writing and User Experience	The course emphasizes the role of rhetoric, ethics, and collaboration in the activities of communicators in a variety of contexts. The course provides the skills needed to navigate technical writing and UX arenas.	3
RWS 3354	Methods for Inquiry & Design	This course provides students with an understanding and practical usage of qualitative research methods. Additionally, students will develop a foundation for inquiry and research design while practicing the practical applications of this foundation.	3
RWS 3367	Foundations of User Experience	This course provides students with an understanding of UX design principles that will be valuable to the research, composition, and maintenance of documents across a variety of professional fields.	3
RWS 4320	Web Authoring	The course introduces key concepts of web design and the software that facilitates it. With the ever-present need for effective online writing, this course provides students with the skills needed to navigate online writing informed by principles that can be applied to their specific fields.	3