Semestermorphosis

November 2010

From Provost Santa Ono, to all UC faculty and staff:

After nearly three months in my role as your Provost, I am quickly but also happily getting to know many of you and to learn why the University of Cincinnati is such a great university. Through this electronic newsletter, in particular, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for all of your good work on the Semester Conversion project. I realize how much work is involved, and I see the long hours that many of you are dedicating to the project. Your work is noticed, and it is also very important. We are all excited about the possibilities that semester conversion has for UC, how it promises transforming effects for multiple aspects of the University that will have lasting implications for teaching and learning at UC. These transformations will have an impact on our curricula, most obviously, but will also impact how we do advising, and even the ways in which we collect, report, and analyze data. So I send a hearty thanks to all of you, and I hope you enjoy reading the second edition of “Semestermorphosis.”

Progress to date:

Semester Conversion Steering Committee: As of November 15, 2010, faculty have created 7,671 semester courses and are making progress on over 390 program curricula. The Academic Coordinating Committee (ACC) has spent the fall term reviewing P1s prior to moving them to the team creating the degree audits for semester degree programs. The Steering Committee continues to meet monthly and is currently working on a plan for bridge courses, or those courses needed for transition purposes, to help bridge the gap between quarter requirements and the new semester curricula. The co-chairs of the Steering Committee have met with each of the college deans to update them on progress within each of the colleges and to ensure that an advising structure is in place, that policies and procedures are being revised, and that TAG courses are being prepared for submission.

Summer 2012 and Semester Schedule Blocks: During this past summer, the Executive Committee approved the 7-week Summer 2012 calendar and the semester course scheduling blocks. Under semesters, MWF classes will begin at 8:00 and run for 55 minutes, with 10 minutes between classes; and TH classes will start at 8:00 and run for 80 minutes, also with a 10-minute break.

Advising: During the summer, we hired and trained 21 advisers. We have determined the design for the IAP (Individual Advising Plan) and agreed to use Degree Audit and Advisor Tool Box as core tools. Starfish Connect, which allows students to schedule appointments through
Blackboard, is currently being used as a live tool. The A-1 for working with transitional students is underway and guiding principles for IAP construction will be published soon. About 200 undergrad programs are in draft form for encoding, and will go through one more final review before completion.

**Semester Conversion Summit:** About 50 UC faculty and administrators attended a Semester Conversion Summit hosted by The Ohio State University in October. UC participants had been heavily involved with the planning of the summit and also led a number of the individual sessions. While UC is making comparatively excellent progress with the conversion project, we also had the opportunity to learn from our sister institutions across the state and to study some of the innovations they are introducing on their own campuses. UC is now planning to host a summit here in Cincinnati sometime next fall, so please stay tuned for further details in subsequent editions of “Semestermorphosis.”

**The Center for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning (CET&L)** has remained one of our key resources for the conversion project. For the remainder of the current academic year, the CET&L plans to offer programs that will help faculty to take their SLOs written for their C-1 forms and integrate them into newly designed course syllabi as well as to develop strategies for assessing student learning within the semester versions of these courses. The general questions shaping these workshops and resources: In light of the new opportunities made possible by a 14-week term, what types of activities, projects or assignments will allow students to practice their learning and provide more efficient mechanisms for assessing student learning? And, how might these be integrated into and reflected by a course syllabus?

Stay tuned via the CET&L website – [http://www.uc.edu/cetl](http://www.uc.edu/cetl) -- for additional information about upcoming workshops.

**A Best-Practices example from Mike Zender, Director of Graduate Studies in DAAP’s School of Design:**

In our first School-wide meeting in the School of Design, we agreed to view semester conversion as one component of a “perfect storm” of change, creating a truly unique opportunity for the School. Keeping with the metaphor, we determined as a faculty to “make waves” rather than be “washed away,” thereby gaining solid agreement from the start to make sweeping changes in our curricula rather than simply tweaking around the edges.

Our first step was to envision the ideal graduate of the various programs in the School of Design. Each faculty envisioned a “portrait of a designer,” with these portraits then analyzed to identify distinctive and common features. The common features eventually became School-wide student learning outcomes (SLOs), with the distinctive ones becoming the seeds of Program-specific SLOs.

We researched by meeting with professionals, alumni, and graduating senior students; by benchmarking our peer institutions; and by identifying patterns in our existing programs. Being a
professional program, we made special efforts to identify what was happening in the profession, not only through the interviews noted above, but also through surveys of professional organization statements, published literature, conference proceedings, and conference attendance. From all of this, we identified affecting forces that characterized the “storm” and discussed the impact of each on our curricula. These relevant contexts of our curricula/Programs formed the basis for our curricular revisioning.

Almost from the start we recognized that a key factor in successful curricular change was gaining constructive, collaborative, consensual agreement at every step. We were fortunate to have complete faculty participation on the several taskforces. Models were proposed, discussed, modified and abandoned. It was storm of post-it notes and dry erase markers for a while, but in the end an entirely new curriculum was unanimously adopted that has numerous innovative features.

One significant curricular change came from the commonalities in the initial portraits of a designer: a number of School-wide core courses, not limited to the foundation year but spread throughout the five-year curriculum and serving as interdisciplinary touch points. This structure leverages our status as one of the few design schools in the country with outstanding programs in all of the design disciplines - Graphic Communication, Fashion, and Industrial Design - that are situated in a College that includes Art, Architecture, and Planning. This disciplinary + interdisciplinary approach not only takes advantage of our strength, it reflects the blurring of professional boundaries and the recognition of the costs of increasing specialization.

There will be a lot of changes to come as we implement our new curricula. The “storm” is far from over! But we believe that what we’ve done will set in motion some pretty big waves of change that promise to alter the landscape of the design professions far into the future.

**Preview of other coming attractions:** As with all developments related to semester conversion, please check back frequently with UC’s official site for this initiative, at [http://www.uc.edu/conversion](http://www.uc.edu/conversion)

We can all be proud of the excellent start that we’ve made on semester conversion, especially for its promise of a profound legacy for the next generations of UC students and faculty. I appreciate all of your good work to date, and also thank you in advance for your continued contributions to this initiative.

Santa J. Ono
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost