

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA ASHEVILLE
FACULTY SENATE

Senate Document Number SD3323S
Date of Senate Approval 03/30/2023

Statement of Faculty Senate Action:

APC Document 23 (MCOM): Remove the MCOM 104 requirement to declare a MCOM major

Effective Date: Fall 2023

1. **Delete:** On page 234, the entry for declaring a major in Mass Communication:

Declaration of Major

Declaring a major in Mass Communication requires the student to have completed MCOM 104.

Impact: Because we are already connecting students with their intended majors, the departments are being assigned the advising load of these pending majors. Reducing the requirements to declare will let the advising load of the department be more accurately reflected by the number of declared majors. Additionally, accurate numbers of majors is especially important for conversations regarding resource allocations.

Having a declared major also allows GradPlan to accurately reflect the student's degree requirements. This will aid in the course selection process during registration and ultimately reduce time to degree completion.

Rationale: Research shows that sense of belonging is a critical factor in student retention. We are proposing to reduce the requirements to declare a major in Mass Communication as a means of gaining a sense of belonging sooner in the student's academic path. Once a student has decided to declare, allowing them to do so will help the student form a connection with their department and peers more quickly than if that path is impeded.

Additionally, as the University works to create a more diverse and inclusive campus for our students, reducing these requirements to declare is an actionable step we can take to help reduce structural barriers on the path to degree completion. This proposal is supported by the UNCA representatives participating in Gardner Institute's Equity in Retention Academy.

This can also avoid conflicting messaging between various policies. Our catalog requires students to declare a major by the time they reach junior standing (60+ earned hours). Students might reach junior standing and receive outreach to declare their major, and respond that they are intending a particular major but have not yet fulfilled the department's requirements to declare. The Registrar's Office then needs to continue to monitor and outreach prior to each registration period until the student has completed the prerequisites and can declare.