

Rationale for Moving Students to the Current Catalog Year When Changing or Adding Majors, Minors, or Tracks/Concentrations

Academic Policies Committee

November 15, 2022

In March of 2022, the Academic Policies Committee was charged with considering possible changes to moving students to the current catalog year when changing or adding majors, minors, or tracks. Currently in GullNet, when a student changes a major, minor or track/concentration, the student's catalog year is automatically changed to the current year. This is an issue for some programs, and once the new General Education program begins, this will cause problems for some students.

Note: Students can only be associated with one catalog. As an example, they may not choose the major curriculum from one year and the General Education curriculum from another. Both the policy to automatically switch the catalog and the option to switch back to the previous catalog have always been in place.

There is a rationale behind switching to the new catalog year when a change to major, minor or track/concentration has been made. More likely than not, the switch is advantageous for the student. Examples include changes to grading policies (e.g.: a core course for a major now requires a D or better rather than a C), updates to course lists for major requirements, and additions of new tracks or concentrations to majors. In many cases, the major, minor, or track/concentration that the student is choosing to add wasn't in existence in their previous catalog year. Moving to the more recent catalog year provides an opportunity for students to be a part of those innovations which were put forward to enhance the curriculum. Without the switch to the new catalog, students can't take advantage of such changes.

It is understood that automatically switching the catalog year can also be a disadvantage for some students; however, after examining the number of students/faculty who have issues versus the total number of changes that are made, the Registrar discovered that the percentage of issues is rather small in comparison to the overall number of students who move to the new catalog. As an example, since September 1, 2022, only thirty-three (33) students submitted requests to switch back to their previous catalog year after making changes to their academic record (e.g., changed major, added a minor, etc.). Of those students, only 4 were made by an academic advisor. None of the 29 students who submitted the catalog year request on their own contacted the Registrar's Office to question or complain about the process.

It is also understood that there are faculty, staff, and students who are not aware of the current process or the rationale for having it. Moving forward, APC recommends increasing the ways in which we advertise the automatic updating of the catalog year. It can be made even clearer that students can request to stay in their original catalog year if all the programs they plan to pursue were offered in that year. As a start, the option to switch back to the previous catalog is

available in GullNet in the same place as the change to major/minor/track process. The instructions have been updated to also highlight the “Change Catalog Year” option.

An explanation of Catalog Year Changes is found on the Forms page of the [Registrar’s Office website](#) . In addition, it is found on the [Change of Major Directions](#). The instructions document has been revised to specifically address the automatic catalog year switch as well as the instructions to switch back. Again, APC recommends that the process is more widely advertised/explained.

Substitutions or waivers may be necessary whether students move forward or whether they choose to stay in their previous catalog. As an example, if students choose their previous catalog year and new courses were not a part of the previous program’s curriculum, the new course can be substituted.

In regard to the new General Education curriculum, it is likely that many of the current General Education courses will be put forward for consideration for the new requirements. That means that most General Education courses will fulfill a requirement in both the former and future catalog years. Since the new curriculum is open to disciplines who haven’t been represented in General Education before, students may have even more options to fulfill the new requirements if their catalog year moves forward. That will be different for the newly added requirements of First Year Seminar, Experiential Learning, and the signature outcomes. To avoid having to waive all of those, the Registrar’s Office will explore options to automatically waive the FYS requirement when students who have matriculated prior to fall 2024 move into the fall 2024 or beyond catalog. Communication will certainly be forthcoming before the new General Education curriculum is implemented. As before, while incoming students can’t choose a catalog year before the year they matriculate, current students will have the option to switch back to their previous catalog (as long as the program they want was active then).