UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
May 8, 2008
Rowe Conference Room, Knight Library

Present:
Andrew Bonamici, Gavin Bruce, Herb Chereck, Hilary Gerdes, Anne Laskaya, Andrew Leavitt, Alexandra Marcus, Steven Pologe, Karen McLaughlin, Bill Rossi, Ron Severson, Karen Sprague, Arkady Vaintrob, and Paul Engelking

Absent:
Dave Hubin, Elizabeth Jarvis, Alan Kimball, Dean Livelybrooks, Kate Wagle, Malcolm Wilson, Elizabeth Reis, and Jim Imamur

Announcements:
Karen Sprague reported that the Foreign Studies Program Committee was pleased by the Council’s endorsement of allowing Study Abroad to fulfill the IC Category of the Multicultural requirement and will review programs for their suitability at its next meeting.

Minutes:
Minutes from April 10, 2008 meeting were accepted via e-mail review. Minutes for April 24 and May 8 will be reviewed and voted on at May 22 meeting.

Multicultural Review:
(See: UO Multicultural Requirement, Number of Multicultural Courses by Categories and Level, General Issues Regarding Multicultural Requirement)

The Chair reviewed the Council’s work on developing general recommendations regarding the Multicultural requirement. The accepted proposal from International Affairs is already in the University Committee on Courses report that will be presented to the Senate on May 14. Other recommendations will be consolidated into a final report to the Senate.

The Council discussed the issue of advising students regarding the Multicultural requirement. Several observations were made:
- Students need to know how to use the tools that are already in place for understanding course requirements (e.g., the Class Schedule, the Handbook, the catalog, Blackboard, etc.);
- Faculty and advising staff need to be made aware of the purpose of the Multicultural requirement;
- Students in liberal arts and humanities majors tend to fulfill the Multicultural requirement automatically through the coursework needed for their majors.
- Department advisors tend to focus on the Multicultural courses available within the majors in their department rather than encouraging students to explore outside their major;
- Non-humanities majors (math and science) tend to exercise more intentionality in their choice of courses that fulfill the Multicultural requirement;
- Students don’t tend to question why they need Multicultural courses, just how they can fulfill the requirement;
- Students’ main concern is the need for syllabi to clearly describe how a particular course meets the Multicultural requirement.

**Topics Courses**

The variability of “Topics courses” can interfere with the effort to ensure that course content effectively addresses the spirit of the Multicultural requirement. Some iterations of a Topics course may be appropriate, whereas others are not. As a response to this problem, Paul Engelking made the motion that “Topics courses” not be used to satisfy the Multicultural requirement. The motion was seconded by Herb Chereck.

The Chair opened the motion for discussion by the Council.

Several problems exist within Topics courses: Under the same title, different topics are taught. Different professors do the teaching and they may or may not be aware that the course overall carries a Multicultural designation.

Council members raised several other questions:
1. Some Topics courses should satisfy the requirement because all their variations fit the criteria. Wouldn’t eliminating such courses create a significant problem?

2. Wouldn’t the Council be wiser to take a smaller step first?

3. Could Topics course titles use clearer defining descriptives so that they are more readily recognized as Multicultural courses?

4. Could Topics course variants be presented to Curriculum Committees for approval as Multicultural courses?

5. Could variants be reviewed at the department level?

6. Could a small group be designated to review variants?

7. Could the Council take a small step at this time and monitor the outcome? Specifically: Ask departments to check each iteration of their Topics courses for their fit with the Multicultural course criteria. A small subgroup from the Undergraduate Council could monitor Topics courses over a period of time to determine the effectiveness of this approach.

The Chair called for a vote on the original motion to exclude Topics courses from satisfying the Multicultural requirement.

The motion was defeated unanimously by the Council.

A small group from the Council will work to craft a motion based on Question 7 (above) to present at the next Council meeting.

It was generally felt that much of the misunderstanding surrounding Multicultural courses could be eliminated by requiring more informative descriptions of them. There was strong support for this approach, which culminated in the following motion:

Starting with the registration period for Fall 2009, expanded course descriptions for all Multicultural courses must be published in the Schedule of Classes by the
deadlines set by the Registrar for the terms in which the courses are offered. Courses not meeting these deadlines will lose their Multicultural designation.

Moved: Ron Severson
Seconded: Anne Laskaya

The motion passed unanimously.

Paul Engelking distributed a suggested model for designing the Undergraduate Council report to the Senate.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 22, 2008, 12:30pm at Rowe Conference Room, the Knight Library.