UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
November 6, 2009
Rowe Conference Room, Knight Library

Present:
Kathie Carpenter, Eric Carlson, Dave Hubin, Jennifer Joslin, Caleb Owen, Amy Goeser Kolb, Karen McLaughlin, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Drew Terhune, Tom Wheeler, Morgan Williamson, Josh Roering, Paul Engelking and Matt Villeneuve

Absent:
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Jordynn Didlick, Sue Eveland, Dean Livelybrooks, Ian McNeely, Kiwako Sakamoto, Ron Severson, Laura Vandenburgh, , and Elizabeth Reis

In the absence of the Undergraduate Council Chair, the meeting was convened by Karen Sprague.

Minutes:
The motion was made to accept the minutes from the November 6, 2009 meeting.

Moved: Karen McLaughlin

Seconded: Drew Terhune

The motion to accept the minutes passed unanimously.

Agenda
Report on Departmental Discussions of Grading Culture

Josh Snodgrass reported that he had an introduced the topic of grade culture at an Anthropology Department meeting. Although the discussion was very brief, Anthropology faculty were in favor of the Council’s effort to improve the UO grade culture and appreciated being included in discussion of the proposals. They did have a concern that an effort to decompress grades might negatively affect students’ acceptance to post-graduate programs. Josh explained that the UGC is aware of this concern and is looking at ways to address it – such as describing any new grading policy on student transcripts. Responding to the Council’s specific proposals, Josh said that the Anthropology faculty liked the idea of providing context information along with grades on transcripts. They are also open to the publishing of grades within the department, indicating that this fits with the current discussion of assessment on campus.

• Discussion
Council members agreed to continue scheduling department meetings to discuss Grade Culture. Some related items the Council might examine in later meetings are:
The relationship of grade distributions, teaching evaluations, and tenure decisions. Student members wondered whether the teaching evaluations they submit are actually read.

- The influence of gender on grading practices and teaching evaluations.

**PPPM Proposal to change the Undergraduate Major and Minor degree requirements**

[See: PPPM Proposal for Undergraduate Program - Version II, and Dean Bronet Approval - Proposal F09]

The Undergraduate Council reviewed the revised proposal from PPPM to change the core requirements for the Major and the Minor. Several questions emerged during the discussion:

- Should there be an economics pre-requisite for the Major as in the comparator programs at other institutions?
- Could PPPM offer Honors Internships that would be particularly appealing to students?
- Could PPPM look to the Career Center for help in the administration of internships?

The Council regrets the loss of an internship requirement for a major that has a significantly applied character, but understands the department’s constraints and the need for flexibility in designing its Major and Minor.

The Convener called for a motion to approve the PPPM proposal.

**The motion was made that the Undergraduate Council endorse the PPPM proposal to change the courses in its core requirements for its Major and Minor degree programs.**

- Moved: Amy Goeser Kolb
- Seconded: Kathie Carpenter

The motion passed with all but one member in agreement; that one was an abstention.

The Council will forward its endorsement to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies.

**General Education – continuing discussion**

The Council continued exploring the idea of re-modeling General Education. There was strong support for the idea of “teaching institutes” as described at the last meeting. The Institutes would be appealing to faculty interested in cross-disciplinary teaching collaboration, and would help students make connections among their courses. In the current model, students are sometimes preoccupied by the mechanics of “fulfilling requirements” and can lose sight of the bigger picture.
Other possible models were suggested:

1. Require students to earn a “non-contiguous minor”, that is, a minor well outside the area of the major.
2. Reduce class size. This is the principal weakness of our current General Education structure. Simply reducing class size, without changing the structure, would help a lot.
3. Emphasize writing and literature.
4. Require some general education to be at the upper-division level, and ideally to build on lower-level courses. Include a capstone experience or an element that requires synthesis of ideas from multiple courses.
5. Don’t lose the advantages and appeal of the present system. Some students welcome the opportunity to choose their own general education courses – without having to fit them into a scheme devised by someone else. After high school, some students really want to be able to choose general education courses based on their own curiosity. The Council feels that this is not something we should discourage.

Council members noted several challenges to any general education design consideration:

- Would Institutes pose difficulties for inter-institutional transfer of credits?
- Will Institutes impose pre-conceived or pre-established questions?
- How will Institutes fit into the “strait-jacket” of the 10-week course? Ans: Flexibility is possible. Geology currently features some 5-week courses that are especially useful for field work.

To both capture all of the interesting ideas that had begun to emerge, the convener asked Council members to jot down their visions of an ideal general education curriculum for discussion at the next meeting. Cathy Kraus will collect these for distribution to the full Council.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 20, 2009, 2:30pm at the Rowe Conference Room in the Knight Library.