UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
January 24, 2011
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

Present:
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, Sue Eveland, Dave Hubin, Jennifer Joslin, Ian McNeely, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Gail Unruh, and Matt Villeneuve,

Absent:
Eric Carlson, Kathie Carpenter, Jordynn Didlick, Amy Goeser Kolb, Dean Livelybrooks, Karen McLaughlin, Drew Terhune, Jim Tice, Tom Wheeler (on leave), Paul Engelking, Judith Baskin and Julie Hessler

Agenda:

AGENDA

Minutes from January 10, 2011 meeting

Continued discussion of General Education:
   FIGs as a possible model

Discussion (as time allows):
   Academic misconduct and new technology:
   Selling of lecture notes on-line

   New Course approval process and pedagogical experimentation

The Council discussed the low attendance rate at Undergraduate Council meetings. Student participation is very important. Faculty members and students who are listed on the Council member roster but who have not been attending will be contacted to determine their ability to participate. Reminders of meetings will be sent more frequently to the membership to encourage their participation.

The Chair previewed the agenda with the Council.

Minutes:

The Chair called for edits or revisions in the minutes of the January 10 meeting. The title of President Lariviere’s white paper was corrected.
The Council briefly previewed the upcoming town hall meeting on the proposed New Partnership.
The motion was made to accept the minutes from the January 10 meeting as corrected.

Moved: Josh Snodgrass
Seconded: Ron Bramhall
The motion to accept the corrected minutes passed unanimously.

Agenda item

- **Update of draft motions on Grade Culture reform presented to Senate Executive Committee**
  The Chair reported that the UGC’s motions have been presented to the Senate Executive Committee. The motions will be presented to the full Senate on Wednesday, March 9, 103 Jaqua Center, and voted upon in April. Each of the three motions must be voted upon separately. During the month of February, UGC members will work with individual senators to answer their questions and address any of their concerns prior to the presentation and the vote.

- **General Education Reform**
  The Chair summarized the various ideas previously proposed for General Education redesign, such as Teaching Institutes, and invited more proposals. The following questions and ideas emerged:
  - If we talk of General Education reform, have we identified what needs to be “reformed”? Are we talking large scale change or small scale change?
    Response:
    o General Education was criticized as a specific problem in the accreditation report of 1997 for being little more than a checklist without any sense of intellectual cohesion.
    o By bundling courses, we might be able to create cross-disciplinary interest.
    o The goal of reform is to help students get more out of General Education and maximize faculty interest in these courses.
  - With Institute-like structures, we could potentially get away from bureaucratic course control and give it back to the faculty, who are closer to the content of the courses.
  - There would still be a need for centralized review. This is the current function of the CAS Curriculum Committee.
  - One problem is that General Education is not well explained to students by their departmental major advisors. These advisors tend to focus exclusively on coursework in the major – leaving advising about General Education to the Office of Academic Advising (OAA) or simply taking a checklist approach. In the work it does, OAA strenuously avoids the checklist approach, but that’s insufficient to overcome the culture that exists in much of the rest of campus.
Connecting Writing courses with specific group-satisfying courses could help students become more thoughtful about their General Education course choices. The Chair noted that Carolyn Bergquist is interested in developing Writing courses that would be connected with group-satisfying courses. The Council agreed that thematically-focused writing courses could be more effective because they would be more interesting to students. The Council also thought that this might be a practical way to improve General Education broadly, and so devoted the remainder of the meeting to how the connection between Writing and group-satisfying courses could be made:

1.) Connect Writing courses to selected FIGs. Use the Writing course attached to a particular FIG to explore relationships between the ideas in the two FIG courses. The current practice of alphabetically assigning terms for Writing courses would need to be adjusted. A more serious problem is that some students in the FIG would likely be exempt from writing (through SAT score or previous credit). Also, adding a third course would put significant constraints on students’ schedules.

2.) Connect a Writing course to a group-satisfying course outside of FIGs. Use the Writing course to explore broad themes that are common to many group-satisfying courses in order to simplify the task for the Writing instructors. The themes could provide the basis for a General Education capstone experience.

3.) Identify significant questions that emerge in Fall Term from FIGs (e.g. What is the nature of god?) and then identify individual group-satisfying courses that are likely to deal with the question and are offered in subsequent terms (Winter and Spring). Link Writing courses to these individual courses and use the Writing courses to explore the big questions from the perspective of particular course material. An advantage of this approach is that it is interdisciplinary, but does not require an elaborate structure or extra work on the part of faculty teaching the group-satisfying courses. It should appeal to the composition faculty because their purpose in their Writing courses is to help students learn to form questions and then answer them. FIG FAs could help generate the questions, and both FIG and non-FIG students could participate in the Writing courses that explore those questions.

The Council settled on #3 as the most practical approach. We could start by identifying questions and courses that appear to be related to them; then we should contact the individual faculty teaching those courses to gauge their interest in having a linked Writing course. No additional effort would be required, but faculty could be invited to visit the associated Writing class for a discussion of the ideas developing there. This structure would also help to address the needs of non-FIG students by giving them the opportunity to think beyond individual courses. Specifically, the Council proposed the following pilot for AY 2011-12:

a) Identify several big questions that will emerge from the Fall 2011 FIGs;
b) Identify two or three Winter and Spring group-satisfying courses that are relevant to each question. For example, the question “What makes us human?” emerges naturally from the “Footprints We Leave” FIG (ANTH 270: Introduction to Biological Anthropology and Bi 131: Introduction to Human Physiology). Students interested in this question would be encouraged to take ANTH 173: Evolution of Human Sexuality, in Winter term and an associated Writing course that would explore “What makes us human?” from the perspective of evolution and/or sexual behavior.

The Chair will speak with Carolyn Bergquist to see how many Writing classes could be used for a pilot project. We probably need at least six in order to try out variations in questions and courses. The pilot will start in Winter and Spring terms of 2012.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 7, 2011, 12:30pm in the Collaboration Room, Knight Library.