UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
February 21, 2011
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, Dean Livelybrooks, Karen McLaughlin, Ian McNeely, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Gail Unruh, and Matt Villeneuve

ABSENT
Eric Carlson, Kathie Carpenter, Sue Eveland, Amy Goeser Kolb, Dave Hubin, Jennifer Joslin, Drew Terhune, Jim Tice, Tom Wheeler (on leave), Paul Engelking, Judith Baskin and Julie Hessler

AGENDA
I. Approve minutes from February 7 meeting
II. Further discussion of General Education
III. Presentation of Science Literacy Program (Judith Eisen and Michael Raymer)

MINUTES
I. APPROVING MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 7, 2011 MEETING
An error in the attendance roster for the February 21 meeting was noted (Gail Unruh did attend). A clarification of the University Senate groups to be contacted by Andrew Bonamici was noted.

The motion was made to accept the minutes from the February 7, 2011 meeting with the noted emendations.

   Moved:    Karen McLaughlin
   Seconded: Josh Snodgrass

The motion to accept the minutes as emended passed unanimously.

*  NON-AGENDA ITEM: UNDERGRADUATE PROPOSAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SENATE REPRESENTATIVES
The Chair reviewed the meetings Council members have been having with Senate representatives in preparation for the presentation of the Undergraduate Council Proposal for Changing the Grade Culture on March 9, 2011.
NON-AGENDA ITEM: CHANGE IN PHILOSOPHY MAJOR
Chair gave a brief history of the Philosophy Department proposal (submitted to Academic Affairs in October 2010) to change the requirements for earning a Bachelor of Science in Philosophy. Many departments offer both a BA and a BS degree, the only difference being whether students take math or foreign language as part of their General Education: the BA requires foreign language; the BS requires mathematics. A few departments, for example the Department of History, require both math and foreign language for the BS because foreign language is one of the History major requirements. The current BS in Philosophy is unique in that it requires an entire second major in a science. The origin of this unusual requirement was the desire to accommodate advanced science majors who wished to add Philosophy as a second major. Since most students interested in a BS in Philosophy do not want to complete an entire major in science, the Philosophy Department is proposing to reduce the BS requirement to a minor in science. This would still make the Philosophy BS an outlier: it would require more coursework than a typical BS, but would not include the math requirement that defines all BS degrees. The proposal needs revision, but there is time pressure because the change has been promised to graduating seniors. Unfortunately, the proposal has only now come to the Undergraduate Council. The Chair posed several questions to the Council:

- Should the requirements for the BS degree in Philosophy be reduced even further—from an extra minor to a few courses?
- Should someone from Philosophy come to the Council to discuss the proposal?
- Is this a small change or one the Philosophy Department needs to discuss and incorporate into a new proposal?

Discussion
The Council discussed these questions and the proposal itself:

i. What are the current requirements for the BA in Philosophy?
   Answer: Just a core set of Philosophy courses and the university’s foreign language requirement.

ii. How does the proposed BS requirement compare with Philosophy BS requirements in the rest of the country?
   Answer: The focus of the UO Philosophy Department is more continental than analytical. Other programs have greater emphasis on formal logic, for example. Therefore, UO Philosophy students need some science courses if they are going to specialize in the Philosophy of Science. There are two separate ideas here:
   a. the BA/BS distinction which is somewhat mechanical (foreign language/mathematics);
   b. the desire to have a Philosophy of Science concentration, which is distinct from getting a BA or BS degree.
This is a good idea, but it should simply be identified as a Philosophy of Science track within the major. The misunderstanding comes from the word “science” in the BS degree. This suggests the degree signifies education in science, when in fact, it doesn’t.
iii. To encourage special competence in certain areas, wouldn’t it be better for the department to create strands within the Philosophy major, e.g. Philosophy of Religion or Political Philosophy and expect students to do additional courses in religious studies or political science?
   
   **Answer:** There is a perception among scientists that students coming from a background of Philosophy of Science do not necessarily have a solid background in science, and the Philosophy Department may want to ensure that they do.

iv. The proposal appears to be designed to benefit students.

The Council considered the consequences of taking no further action at this time. It was agreed that the proposal is a change within the Philosophy major and would not require petitions to the Academic Review Committee. In contrast, if the change involved university requirements, appeals would be in the jurisdiction of the ARC. With no action by the UGC, the requirement of a separate science major for the BS would remain, but the department could allow a science minor to fulfill the requirement. This is a temporary solution, and the University’s math requirement would still have to be met.

The Council advised that the Philosophy Department should submit a revised proposal for full curriculum review if they wish to require more than mathematics for their BS degree. Scott Pratt will be asked to discuss these issues with the Undergraduate Council at a future date.

**II. GENERAL EDUCATION AND WRITING COURSES**

The Chair reported on his discussions with Caroline Bergquist, Director of the Writing Program, on a pilot of themed Writing sections in Winter 2012. Karen Sprague proposed some themes emerging from FIGs that might be useful. The idea is to use readings from the specific courses connected with each theme that is linked to Writing courses:

- What makes us human?
- Modern media: the end of solitude?
- Is Oregon global? (globalism vs. provincialism)
- Sustainability in the environment

Caroline’s concern is that she needs to train GTFs using specific readings, which must be reviewed in advance by Composition faculty. Piloting four different themes would be a challenge. She counter-proposed with a list of the current readings used in writing sections. Is there a way the FIG themes could be explored through readings that are already in the Composition collection?

**Discussion**

Council members reviewed the Reader materials from the current writing course. They discussed how FIG themes might be related to the materials:
- Personal experience in the WR 121 course: topics were contemporary, involving discussion, research, and writing. However, not every topic engaged students. There was a desire for more writing to relate to specific, non-writing courses students are taking.

- Themes could be taken from the Composition Reader. There are several that seem to relate well to FIGs.

- Sometimes within a FIG itself, it is challenging to engage students because the College Connection course does not meet their expectations.

- Writing course themes should include more than FIG themes; maybe incorporate ideas from Sophomore seminars, where students are more certain of their interests.

- It may be advantageous to give the idea of theme-linked writing courses more thought and take more time for planning instead of trying to cobble something together.

### III. SCIENCE LITERACY PROGRAM

The Chair introduced Judith Eisen, Professor of Biology, and Michael Raymer, Professor of Physics, to present their project for developing a Science Literacy Program which is being funded by a grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI). Application for the grant was by invitation only and only 50 grants were awarded nation-wide.

The UO HHMI grant project is focused on developing a program addressing science literacy program for non-science majors. Project goals are: to improve the way General Education science courses are taught to non-science majors; and to engage students in learning basic sciences in such a way that they better understand the scientific and technological changes affecting everyday life. The project is a collaborative effort among the departments of Biology, Physics, Chemistry, and Geology. The project grew out of the grassroots interests of faculty and students. It is also designed to assist GTFs, Fellows, and upper-division undergraduate science majors to become better teachers and conveyors of scientific information for undergraduates. The Science Literacy Program is a response to the desire to develop better pedagogy for science teaching. Data collected over the past 30 years show that traditional teaching does not necessarily lead to learning in science classes. Ideally, a good way is to provide laboratory experiences, but UO does not have the resources for providing laboratories for thousands of students. The challenge, then, is to address the question, how do we teach large lecture science courses in an inquiry-based, exploratory way? There are some technological aids, such as clickers, that help with student engagement. There are a number of new courses being developed that are cross-disciplinary. One is being cross-taught by a physicist and a geologist; another course is being taught by a biologist and a chemist; and another course is being taught by a physicist and a chemist. It is important that these courses satisfy the General Education requirements for students at large, since they are the targeted audience for this project. The project is looking to the Undergraduate Council to see if there is a way to expedite the approval process for these new courses to be part of the General Education curriculum. Currently, the process takes 12-13 months for approval, and that is too long because then these courses could not be offered to the cohort of students for which they are intended.
The Provost and Vice Provost are very enthusiastic about the project. CAS Dean Scott Coltrane is guaranteeing funding for the program beyond the end of the grant. A coordinator is being hired (with a PhD in one of the sciences and a background of experience with this kind of pedagogy). The biggest impediment to pedagogical change is time. The HHMI grant will help buy faculty time to make this change. GTFs and upper-division science majors will be co-instructors in the new courses. Ultimately, the program would help provide a certificate in science literacy teaching, but this is further down the road. The ultimate goal is to change the entire culture of teaching science and increase science literacy.

Discussion
The Council asked questions/commented about the project:

- Is there training available now for this pedagogical approach—is it in use at other institutions?  
  **Answer:** There are some workshops available and people will be sent to them. But having the time for this is a challenge. Also, the Teaching and Learning Center will become more skilled in training for science teaching. Georganne Cooper is working closely with the Science Literacy Program group.

- How can team-taught cross-disciplinary courses be counted under the new budget model? Are there any pilot courses?  
  **Answer:** The first course is being piloted currently in the Honors College. The hope is that there will be two new courses next winter that will qualify as General Education courses. There is a lot of support for the project, but the mechanism for General Education qualification is not clear. The requirement of General Education courses having to be taught every year may be an impediment. Perhaps some of the Gen Ed courses should be more flexible to retain more current relevancy with students. The General Education course approval process may need to be studied and streamlined. Cross-listing of courses presents a challenge to the type of courses being developed. The reason given is that the Banner system will not support this. There has been some movement within the last six months to resolve this issue, but this will be further investigated.

- The Science Literacy Program is congruent with a trend towards thematic connection between courses which seems to be a direction General Education may be moving. Also, inter-departmental consultation as these types of courses are being developed can help prevent concerns around “turf-treading.”

Judith expressed appreciation to the Council for its suggestions and support.

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