UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
May 16, 2011
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Kathie Carpenter, Sue Eveland, Dave Hubin, Karen McLaughlin, Ian McNeely, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Drew Terhune, Gail Unruh,

ABSENT
Ron Bramhall, Eric Carlson, Amy Goeser Kolb, Jennifer Joslin, Dean Livelybrooks, Jim Tice, Matt Villeneuve, Tom Wheeler, Paul Engelking, and Judith Baskin and Julie Hessler

AGENDA
I. Minutes from April 18 and May 2, 2011 meetings
II. General Social Science major (Reuben Zahler, General Social Sciences Major director; Priscilla Southwell, Political Science)
III. Discussion of Academically Adrift

MINUTES
I. APPROVING MINUTES FROM APRIL 18, AND MAY 2, 2011 MEETINGS
The Chair called the meeting to order and called for any comments or edits to the minutes of April 18 and May 2, 2011. None were made.

The motion was made to accept the minutes from the April 18, 2011 and May 2, 2011 meetings.

Moved: Gail Unruh
Seconded: Karen McLaughlin

The motion to accept the minutes passed unanimously.

II. GENERAL SOCIAL SCIENCES MAJOR: UPDATE REPORT
Before initiating the report to the Council on the General Social Sciences Major, the Chair introduced Ruth Keele, Assistant Vice Provost in the Office of Academic Affairs. Ruth was present to observe the Council’s discussion on the GSS Major in an effort to better understand the Council’s role in the process for reviewing new program proposals. She is examining internal and external review processes in order to streamline them.
The Chair then introduced Priscilla Southwell, Department Head of Political Science, and Reuben Zahler, Director of the General Social Sciences Major, which the UGC endorsed the previous year with recommendations. The Chair recapped the concerns the Council had expressed about the GSS program when it was originally presented: 1) the program needs to be directed by faculty subcommittees for each of the tracks; 2) the subcommittees should clarify the course requirements and advising in each of the tracks; 3) a brief, collegial meeting of the Council with the faculty directors of each track should occur during AY 2010–11. Additional recommendations were made regarding advertising of the major, advising in the major, and budget. These were seen as matters typically left to departmental discretion, but need special attention in an interdisciplinary, non-department based major such as this one. The Council wished to be kept apprised of the addition, deletion, or significant alteration of tracks, as well as problems that might arise.

Reuben Zahler gave a brief history of his involvement with the major. In August, he was asked by Scott Coltrane, Dean of CAS, to serve as the Director of the GSS major. Initially, the program was to be inaugurated in the Fall of 2011, but the Senate voted to activate the major in January 2011, instead. Majors have been accepted into the program since March 2011, numbering 37 at the current time.

Administrative oversight of the major is now with a Faculty Guidance Committee composed of the Director, two deans of CAS (Scott Coltrane and the Associate Dean of Social Sciences) and representatives (department heads and 1-2 faculty) from History, Political Science, Economics, Sociology, and Geography. This group works to oversee the curriculum, assure academic soundness, avoid academic drift in the four tracks, and ensure appropriate academic advising for students. Each track within the major has its own subcommittee which makes curricular decisions for that specific track in consultation with the Director of the major. Already, several curriculum adjustments are being made to align the tracks with practice in other majors (e.g. the total number of credits has been increased from 40 to 48). These changes are being processed through the regular channels of curricular review.

A descriptive paragraph has been developed for each of the four tracks that presents its intellectual framework and career-oriented purpose.

Priscilla Southwell, member of the Faculty Guidance Committee, as well as two of the track subcommittees, presented the update on one GSS Track, *Globalization, Environment, and Policy* [previously titled “Geo-politics]. This was the most problematic track in the original GSS proposal last year. The GSS Director and faculty from the Political Science and Geography departments worked to address concerns of the UGC and others. The curriculum has been revamped by removing courses that do not contribute to intellectual coherence. There was also an effort to clarify the purpose of this track – viz. to fill a gap not currently filled by majors in PPPM, Environmental Science, Geography, or International Studies. Specifically, the intent is to focus this track on issues of policy and environment on an international scale.

The Undergraduate Council asked several questions of the presenters:

- What is “Globalization, Environment and Policy”? Does the term “environment” mean environmental policy on a global level or are there other levels of policy included?
**Answer:** The track is centered on the environment, but a career in this area may involve an understanding of “environment” in several different contexts: local, state, regional, as well as international or “global” settings. This is truly an interdisciplinary major. The Council suggested that clarifying language that distinguishes this major from similar ones (e.g. Environmental Studies or International Studies) would be helpful.

– What competencies will students acquire through this major?  
**Answer:** There will be a research competency in quantitative and qualitative analysis of environmental issues. There is both breadth and specialization within the major. The track is focused on career preparation in many different contexts (social, economic, geographic) for addressing policy and environmental issues. Methodology, assessment, and analysis will be core competencies in the major. The students with this major will be prepared to go into careers that involve problem-solving.

– What was the process for focusing the Track by eliminating courses?  
**Answer:** The original curriculum for the Geo-Political track was examined carefully by the Faculty subcommittee and focused toward policy development by removing three of the 21 possible breadth courses and eight of 47 possible specialization courses.

– Do students in this track need to understand economics? It appears that there is no requirement for economics.  
**Answer:** An understanding of economics is desirable, but not required. There is concern that too many requirements would limit students’ flexibility. This major is seen as addressing the needs of students who have not settled into a major. They can major in GSS with a certain degree of intentionality, while retaining flexibility. The Council was comfortable with the restructuring of the curriculum for the Globalization, Environment and Policy track. Reuben will take the suggestion for improvement of the track’s descriptive paragraph back to the subcommittee. He will also explore the possibility of putting Economics into the required core curriculum of the track.

– “Crime, Law and Society” track?  
**Answer:** This track was designed for students interested in basic questions of law, society, crime, and the influence of class, ethnicity, and region. The track was designed with three different careers in mind, viz. law, law enforcement, and social work. The curriculum did not require much change from its original formulation. The number of credits has been increased from 40–48, and a requirement for 400-level courses may be added. Career oriented sub-track curricula have been developed for purposes of advising. These make it straightforward to recommend a distinctive course to students interested in law or law-enforcement, for example. However, students are not required to declare a specialization.

– Will more 400-level courses be added?  
**Answer:** Eventually, but not in the immediate future. The challenge to adding 400-level courses is that many have pre-requisites that are difficult for students not in that department to meet.
– Will this be a weakness of the GSS Major?
   *Answer:* Unfortunately, yes. In the GSS major, students are not channeled into the more rigorous intellectual depth of 400-level courses as they are in a traditional single discipline-based major. The strength of the GSS major is that its breadth will allow students to follow a theme across disciplines.

– In the absence of a capstone in the major, is there some kind of practicum for students?
   *Answer:* Not yet, but the Faculty Committee is looking forward to developing internships and/or practica. These are expensive propositions and the hope is to raise funds through CAS donors. Former GSS majors are candidates and the Development Office is working on this approach.

The UGC was comfortable with the restructuring of the curriculum in the *Crime, Law and Society* track.

### III. Academically Adrift

Following the discussion of the GSS curricula, the Undergraduate Council continued viewing the DVD on *Academically Adrift*.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 6, 2011, 12:00pm at the Collaboration Room of the Knight Library.