UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
October 5, 2010
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

Present:
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Sue Eveland, Dave Hubin, Dean Livelybrooks, Karen McLaughlin, Ian McNeely, Ron Severson, Karen Sprague, Matt Villeneuve, and Julie Hessler

Absent:
Eric Carlson, Kathie Carpenter, Jordynn Didlick, Jennifer Joslin, Amy Goeser Kolb, Josh Snodgrass, Drew Terhune, Jim Tice, and Tom Wheeler (on leave),

Guests: Lisa Freinkel, Associate Professor, English Department and Comparative Literature Program

The Chair gave an overview of the meeting’s agenda.

Minutes:
The Chair called for any emendations or corrections to the minutes of the June 3, 2010 meeting. There were none.

The motion was made to accept the minutes from the June 3, 2010 meeting.

Moved: Dean Livelybrooks
Seconded: Karen McLaughlin
The motion to accept the minutes passed unanimously.

Agenda
Update on status of the General Social Science Major
The Chair reported that Dean Scott Coltrane has tentatively identified someone to shepherd the proposed new General Social Science Major through the review process at the state level.
The Undergraduate Council reiterated its expectation that the faculty involved in the new major will meet with the UGC (as noted in the June 3 minutes and in the 2-page conditional endorsement of the proposal for the GSS major issued in June.)

Priorities for UGC attention in 2010-2011:
The Chair reviewed items of unfinished business that the UGC will address during the course of the academic year.
Grade Inflation
[See: Remaining Tasks on Grade Culture]
The Chair noted that the Council will pursue Grade Culture vigorously with the goal of submitting a proposal in the form of a motion to the University Senate before the end of the year. The Council briefly discussed possible strategies for the next steps.

- **Discussion**
  - The Senate President has indicated that any UGC proposal on Grade Inflation will need to consult with multiple committee reviews (e.g. Academic Requirements Committee, the Scholastic Review Committee, the Faculty Advisory Committee, and perhaps the Academic Council).
  - Should the proposal go to the Academic Council that is being formed by the Senate? The purpose of the Academic Council is to reduce the labyrinth of current committees. The Academic Council is yet to be formed by the Senate, however, so we should proceed by communicating with the existing committees.
  - The UGC already has a Grade Inflation Report incorporating feedback from its blog and Town Hall meetings held last spring. Now that report needs to be converted into a motion.
  - It is advisable to discuss the first form of the proposal with as many people as possible to give opportunity for careful consideration beyond the relatively short time available during the formal presentation to the Senate.
  - The UGC will have a proposal to present to the Senate by the end of the year.

Other suggested topics for 2010-2011:
[See: Suggested Topics for 2010-11]

Capstone Projects
An item the UGC feels needs to be addressed is the institution of Capstone Projects in the context of General Education. Several aspects of this proposal were discussed, including:

  - **Cost:**
    - Capstone projects are perceived by some to be expensive in terms of personnel to run them.

  - **Current offerings:**
    - Has a survey been done of current departmental capstone projects? The Process for Change Initiative tried to do such a survey and found it to be very difficult. The Assessment Council should have data on the availability of capstone experiences because departments have been reporting them as one means of assessing what their students have learned.

  - **Alternative:**
    - Capstones are usually offered in majors, but they could also be part of the General Education curriculum. Upper division Group-satisfying courses could serve as capstones by requiring synthesis of ideas from earlier Group courses. Teaching Institutes (see below) would facilitate this.

Teaching Institutes
The Chair then introduced Lisa Freinkel, Associate Professor in the Department of English and the Comparative Literature Program. Lisa presented to the Council an informal proposal which arose from one of the Big Idea proposals for Teaching Institutes and was also noted in the Global Oregon Big Idea.

Teaching Institutes are conceived as being a cluster of existing Group-satisfying courses taught by faculty who are interested in exploring a general topic from the perspectives of their fields. The topic could be problem-based (e.g., Sustainability) or it could be conceptually-based. The courses taught within the “problem” or the “concept” would be coherent, related, and significant. The group of courses could potentially include writing courses and math courses --- which are part of General Education but aren’t Group Satisfying. As a pilot, Lisa proposed an Inter-linguistic/Translation (cross-cultural) Teaching Institute centered around languages and the literature in them.

The Council explored the proposal further, raising several points for consideration:
- A critique of the proposal is that clustered courses tend to morph into sequences and students do not take course sequences.
- Where do Teaching Institutes arise from? They come out of faculty interests and they may include practical outcomes. A Certificate in translation in Romance Languages is being considered in the proposed Teaching Institute.
- What are incentives for developing Teaching Institutes or participating in Teaching Institutes? One incentive is to move away from the checklist approach to General Education. There are already programs in existence on which the Institutes can be modeled, e.g. the FIG program. Moreover, Teaching Institutes seem to provide a “bridge” for students between the “push” of the FIG program and the “pull” of a capstone project in General Education.
- There is a general appeal in the idea of opening up the General Education structure through Teaching Institutes. Moreover the Teaching Institute model could be implemented immediately and could grow and evolve within the current curriculum.

The Council encouraged Lisa to continue exploring the proposed Teaching Institute model and to also look at the potential for 300- and 400-level courses that could serve as capstone courses.

The Chair circulated a sign-up sheet around the Council for volunteers to serve on sub-committees for identified business to finish, i.e. Grade Inflation and General Education Reform.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 19, 2011, 11:30am at the Collaboration Room, the Knight Library.