UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
October 19, 2010
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

Present:
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Eric Carlson, Sue Eveland, Jennifer Joslin, Dean Livelybrooks, Ian McNeely, Karen Sprague, Matt Villeneuve, and Judith Baskin

Absent:
Kathie Carpenter, Jordynn Didlick, Amy Goeser Kolb, Dave Hubin, Karen McLaughlin, Ron Severson, Josh Snodgrass, Drew Terhune, Jim Tice, Tom Wheeler (on leave), and Julie Hessler

Guests:
Carolyn Bergquist, Sr. Instructor, English Department and Director, Composition Program

Introductions:
The Chair introduced Judith Baskin, Professor, Judaic Studies Program and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences as the alternate representative of the CAS Curriculum Committee to the Undergraduate Council. Judith shares representation responsibilities with Julie Hessler.

Minutes:
The Chair asked for a review of the minutes of the previous meeting. A few minor corrections were made regarding attendance and clarifying part of the discussion on the cost of Capstone projects.

The motion was made to accept the minutes from the October 5, 2010 meeting with the noted emendations.

Moved: Dean Livelybrooks
Seconded: Eric Carlson
The motion to accept the minutes with the emendations passed unanimously.

Agenda
Grade Culture report to the Scholastic Review Committee and to the Academic Review Committee
The Chair noted that Undergraduate Council member Josh Snodgrass sits on the Academic Review Committee and will be presenting the UGC Grade Culture to the ARC.
The Chair reported that he had also spoken with the Scholastic Review Committee chair, Elizabeth Reis, who will take it up with her full committee.

Judith Baskin reported that Reuben Zahler, Instructor of History in the Robert D. Clark Honors College, has been appointed as .25 FTE Director of the General Social Sciences major in CAS, overseeing the set up of the faculty and the formation of the GSS advisory committee. The proposal to establish the major will be presented at the OUS Provosts Meeting at the end of October. By mid-Spring term, the director and the track heads within the major will be ready to meet with the Undergraduate Council to review the program and look at the academic coherence within each track of the major. The review will hopefully be completed in one meeting with the Council.

**Writing Program and General Education**
[See: Writing and General Education]

The Chair introduced Carolyn Bergquist, Director of the Composition Program in the Department of English, explaining that she was going to discuss the relationship of the Writing Program to the General Education curriculum. She presented a brief description of the writing program required of all students graduating from the University of Oregon. Basically, she explained, the program—composed of WR 121, WR 122 and/or WR 123—is grounded in inquiry and finding good reasons for making claims and ideas. The Writing program is assessed on outcomes, that is, on students being able to demonstrate three qualities in their writing appropriate for the end of the first year of college: demonstration of a logical and rhetorical core in writing that posits a query (or thesis) and develops an answer to that query in a logical, well organized, and reasoned way; appropriate demonstration of the techniques and mechanics of writing; and a demonstrated understanding of the processes of writing.

Two courses in the Writing program are required:
- WR 121 - an introduction to written reasoning
  And either
- WR 122 - developing more sophisticated written argumentation
  Or
- WR 123 - research writing in the context of argumentation

There are some upper division writing courses that focus on technical writing, business writing, and advanced composition. The Writing program course sections are taught largely by Graduate Teaching Fellows (averaging about 40 GTFs each year). They are generally in English, Creative Writing, Comparative Literature, Folklore, or Philosophy graduate programs. Carolyn invited questions from the Council. The Council inquired about several aspects of the program.

- **Discussion**
  - Do freshmen take the writing courses in a pattern? Freshmen are strongly urged to take WR 121 in the freshman year and then take WR 122 in the sophomore year. However, there is a challenge with some arriving at their senior year not having yet completed their Writing requirement.
  - Should WR courses be required regardless, or is there a measurable threshold that students can pass out of or waive the requirement? There is always a need for
writing instruction, especially during the transition from high school to college study. There is also a need for graduate level writing instruction.

-Can higher level writing courses be substituted for WR 121 or WR 122? Very rarely would this occur; transfer students might be able to do this, but this is very exceptional.

-How well does the Writing Program segue into the writing skills required for specific major areas of study? Writing outside the area of special expertise and majors increases reasoning skills. Students learn to make the transfer of the reasoning skills acquired through the Writing Program to develop stronger writing skills within their majors. Particularly, GTFs experience improvement in their own writing skills through their active teaching in the Writing Program.

-Is there a way to strongly encourage students, or to enforce completion of, the writing requirements by the end of the sophomore year? Clearly, it is to their advantage to have these courses under their belts by the time they are junior and are undertaking serious work in their majors. A lot of majors are requiring WR 121 or WR 122 as pre-reqs for getting into a major.

Karen Sprague explained that establishing the completion of the Writing requirement by the end of the sophomore year as a requirement was a project undertaken by the Undergraduate Council at one point that was never finished. That was because of the discovery of the “Writing bulge,” the large number of juniors and seniors who had not completed their writing requirement, needed to be addressed immediately. This precluded being able to establish the requirement. The problem was decreased (in terms of reducing the number of upperclassmen needing to complete the requirement), but it is starting to creep back up again with the recent enrollment surges. In general, there is still enthusiasm for having this requirement.

The Council several possible ways of enforcing the requirement completion by the end of the sophomore year:
- A hold could be put on the record of upperclassmen not in compliance;
- Restrict WR 121, 122, and 123 to freshmen and sophomores only;
- Juniors and seniors register first, so they have access to the courses; not making the choice to complete the requirement is the problem with upperclassmen;
- Course repeaters also take up seats from freshmen and sophomores (because the minimum grade to pass writing courses is C- or better);
- Transfer students do not admit without at least one writing course;
- Students who delay their Writing requirement could be blocked from registering for next term;
- Students who delay their Writing requirement could be required to see an academic advisor;
- The necessity of writing courses at UO is emphasized in order to succeed at the university in upper level coursework, but if we allow students to arrive at their Junior year without having completed the requirement (or allowing the course to be taken elsewhere and then transferred in), are we hurting our own credibility?

- It is a problem that there are probably not as many papers assigned in courses as we would like and there is not enough time available to devote to actually critiquing the writing of those papers, in most cases;

- There could be a Jr-Sr writing class held at 8am on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays or at 4pm (or later).

The Council also discussed the Readers used in the writing courses. Carolyn explained that the courses are structured around three essay cycles. A cycle is: critical reading; discussion to explore arguments in those readings; and development of the questions to be answered in the essay the students write. In Teaching Institutes, there would be plenty of material which would provide argumentation and different perspectives on an argument.

The Council discussed the integration of Writing Courses within Teaching Institutes:
  - Would it work logistically to link TI sections to customized Readers in the Writing Courses?
    As long as the Readers could be vetted to the TI sections.
    - Two disparate CRNs can be linked in the new Banner System in the Registrar’s Office;
    - Composition and Text Committees in the writing program would collaborate with institutes to create the writing sections within the Teaching Institutes.

  - If a TI requires a WR 123 course, how could the Writing Program address this need? This could be a challenge because the demand for WR 123 is very small. Moreover, the term system is not advantageous to writing research papers.

    - The essential need is for more writing, of all kinds. Students need to write early, write often, and write about what they care about intellectually. All of this speaks more and more to the need for capstone courses / experiences.

Carol concluded that she is very willing to work with Lisa Freinkel to create an incorporated writing course for the proposed Translinguistics Teaching Institute.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 2, 2010, 11:30am at the Collaboration Room in the Knight Library.