UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
January 20, 2012  
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT  
Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, Ashley Buchholz, Kathie Carpenter, Dave Hubin, Loren Kajikawa, Dean Livelybrooks, Ian McNeely, Ben Smood, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Michael Sugar, Zachary Taylor, Li-Shan Chou, Stephen Frost, and Paul Engelking

ABSENT  
Susan Anderson, Sue Eveland, Jennifer Joslin, Karen McLaughlin, Tom Wheeler, and Elizabeth Reis

AGENDA  
I. Approve minutes  
II. SOJC honors proposal  
III. Continuing work on grade culture  
IV. Priorities for the Undergrad Council

MINUTES  
I. MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 18 AND DECEMBER 2, 2011 MEETINGS  
A brief summary of the actions of the previous two meetings of the Council was distributed. Detailed minutes will be distributed to members at a later date for review and approval.

II. PROPOSAL FOR HONORS PROGRAM IN SOJC  
The Chair introduced Kim Sheehan, Professor in the School of Journalism and Communication (SOJC), to present a proposal from SOJC.

With 2,500 majors in SOJC, the school has developed an honors program targeted toward high achieving majors outside of the Honors College. Typical Journalism students, as they progress through their major, don’t have enough opportunity to interact with other highly motivated majors.

SOJC pre-majors take 8 credits of introductory courses in any of the four concentration areas: Advertising, Public Relations, Journalism, and Communication Studies. They also take 20 credits in Gateway courses. Juniors and Seniors are required to take 20 credits in their major area and 16 credits in context courses. Accreditation standards require 60 credits.
The SOJC Honors program would consist of 3 of 4 context courses presented in smaller cohort settings. These cohort classes would be heavy in reading, writing, and research. A 1-credit Thesis writing class would be taken in the senior year and the final production of the program would be a researched thesis paper. Flexibility of study would be built in with the three context courses. The qualifying GPA for eligibility to enter the Honors program is 3.5 or higher. Cohorts would consist of 24–25 students.

Council members raised a number of questions to Kim following her presentation:

- How was the number “25” students determined to be a cohort?
  
  *Answer:* SOJC faculty agreed on this number a manageable small class size. In SOJC there is a rule that a class cannot be smaller than 10 students.

- What is the admissions process for the honors program?
  
  *Answer:* Applicants for the program will be recruited from among sophomores with a 3.5 or better GPA. Applicants will be asked to submit writing samples, participate in an interview, and there will be an informal review with faculty who have taught the applicants.

- What are the criteria for admission to the program? How many applicants will you have?
  
  *Answer:* SOJC anticipates that 30% of students with the qualifying GPA will commit to the honors program. This is based on the proportion of qualifying business students who are in the LCB Honors program. Honors College students can double-dip on their thesis project *if* the thesis committee is chaired by an SOJC faculty member.

- How is the thesis project organized?
  
  *Answer:* There is a timetable set up for the thesis project, beginning in the junior year. A SOJC thesis advisor is assigned. The SOJC Honors Program director will teach the 1-credit thesis course in the senior year. There are currently 35 SOJC faculty available to serve as theses advisors among the four major concentration areas. There may also be a capstone production experience of some kind available in the honors program, but a research component will be required of all students in the program.

- How will new courses fit into this structure?
  
  *Answer:* New courses for the honors program would likely be 400-level context courses, which are topical and offered under an existing 412 number.

Council members shared some observations with Kim:

- Honors courses cannot just append “H” to a course that already exists. Honors courses need their own specific numbers. The Committee on Courses wants to see a standing honors committee within a school or college to oversee development of honors courses. Historically, the Honors College had to approve all honors courses
  
  - On the other hand, faculty want to see flexibility for schools and departments to develop honors courses for high-achieving student. Local oversight of Honors courses would permit more flexibility, but guidance in the form of more specificity in the criteria. A university-wide evaluation procedure for Honors courses is needed.
It is difficult to foster an honors culture among students if they do not start until their junior year. SOJC hopes to develop its honors program over time as a recruiting tool. In the meantime, maybe a Challenge FIG for the SOJC Honors Program can be developed so that an honors cohort can begin to form before the junior year.

Kim thanked the Council for listening to the SOJC proposal and responding with suggestions. At this time, she left the meeting.

Council members discussed the proposal among themselves. There was general agreement that the honors program proposal was a good idea. The Chair was directed to formalize four specific recommendations to SOJC:

1. Consider specifying program admittance criteria in the proposal itself.
2. Redouble efforts to list honors courses under their own numbers, pending resolution of the “H” suffix issue currently being examined.
3. Start courses for thesis development earlier in the process (preferably before the junior year).
4. Clarify GPA cut-offs for eligibility to enter/remain in the honors program.

The motion was made to endorse the SOJC proposal to establish an honors program, folding the four stated recommendations into the proposal.

Moved: Dean Livelybrooks
Seconded: Paul Engelking

The motion to endorse the proposal with the emendments passed unanimously.

The Chair announced that the University Senate has invited Nancy Golden, Springfield Schools Superintendent and Special Assistant to the Governor on Education, to talk about the governor’s education proposal at the University Senate meeting on Wednesday, March 7, 2012. He invited and encouraged the Undergraduate Council to attend the meeting.

The meeting adjourned.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 3, 2012, 2:30pm at the Collaboration Room of the Knight Library.