UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
February 3, 2012
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, Ashley Buchholz, Sue Eveland, Dave Hubin, Jennifer Joslin, Karen McLaughlin, Ian McNeely, Ben Smood, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Michael Sugar, Zachary Taylor, Tom Wheeler, Li-Shan Chou, and Paul Engelking

ABSENT
Kathie Carpenter, Loren Kajikawa, Dean Livelybrooks, and Elizabeth Reis

AGENDA
I. Minutes from November 18 & December 2, 2011 meetings and January 20, 2012 meeting

II. Recognizing College Scholars program on transcripts, continued discussion on adding “H” suffix to course number

III. UO Committee on Courses course approval process

GUESTS
The Chair introduced Kathy Warden, Program Manager for the Policy Library from the Provost's Office, who will be working as an administrator for the Committee on Courses to provide efficiency to course review process within the Committee. She had been invited to the UGC meeting as an observer.

MINUTES

I. MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 18 AND DECEMBER 2011, AND JANUARY 20, 2012, MEETINGS
The Chair called for any changes or emendments to the minutes of the November 18 & December 2, 2011, and the January 20, 2012 meetings. There was one correction in attendance at the November 18, 2011 and January 20, 2012 meetings and a spelling correction of a member’s name. Josh Snodgrass asked for a correction in the Nov. 18 minutes to reflect that the HPHY major has a faculty of “8 tenure-related faculty and 2 NTTFs.” No other emendments or changes were made.
The motion was made to accept the minutes from the November 18 & December 2, 2011 meetings and the January 20, 2012 meeting with the noted changes.

Moved: Josh Snodgrass  
Seconded: Ben Smood

The motion to accept the minutes as corrected was passed unanimously.

II. RECOGNIZING COLLEGE SCHOLARS PROGRAM ON TRANSCRIPTS: ADDING “H” SUFFIX TO COURSE NUMBERS

Paul Engelking outlined discussions within the Committee on Courses (UOCC) as it worked on a draft entitled “Criteria for Adding an “H” Suffix to a Course Number” in an attempt to provide clarity. Paul said that the Committee worked to incorporate the Council’s recommendation that the criteria “be flexible” and “be specific.” He distributed a copy of the Committee’s draft that will be submitted in a report to the University Senate for approval. An endorsement from the Undergraduate Council is not required, but the Committee does appreciate the Undergraduate Council’s input and support on the document.

DISCUSSION

Paul and members of the Council reviewed the Committee’s draft, discussing each criterion listed:

– [Student] Preparedness through special background skills, experience, and/or achievement, e.g. prior participation in an honors class, a cumulative GPA of 3.3 in major—no discussion.

– Class Content [significantly deeper and more analytical than non-honors classes]—no discussion.

– Class size [20 or less for lectures; 12 or less for labs/discussion sessions.] Other class or lab sizes will be considered only if other factors (multiple instructors/course assistants, cohesive student cohort) are demonstrated that can insure there will be continued, active participation of all students in the class. Council members felt that specifying only 12 students in labs/discussion groups is restrictive. Several felt that this could be rephrased to “20 or fewer—a number that allows for intensive labs/discussion sessions.” Paul indicated that the UOCC will retain the current specified numbers for class size, with the option of larger numbers if intensive experience for all students can be demonstrated.

– Mentoring [close advising of students by faculty outside of class.] Honors College is very specific in the expectation that faculty will meet one-on-one with each student in honors course outside of class. Council noted that “mentoring” also implies an ongoing relationship with students, beyond the course, for advising, career counseling, recommendations, deeper discussion, etc.
- **Faculty** [qualifications of principal faculty in honors courses with terminal degrees in their fields.] Council noted that a PhD in and of itself does not guarantee effective honors-level teaching. Members suggested a line be added noting that faculty may have extensive academic training or professional experience in the field without necessarily having a PhD.

- **Monitoring** [of course quality by departments or colleges.] This includes monitoring faculty teaching honors courses, especially when turnover occurs. The UOCC asks that specific available faculty be identified by the department. Departments need to explain how the course would continue during transitions among instructors for the course.

- **Articulation** [of honors courses with the rest of the curriculum.] Honors courses are more in depth than courses covering similar content in the general curriculum. Council members observed that having honors courses outside of the Honors College will help distribute and broaden academic opportunities for high-achieving students throughout the university. Honors courses appeal to students planning to go to graduate school in their major fields. Lower-level honors courses have a developmental aspect, in addition to depth and focus, that help high-achieving freshmen and sophomores develop their academic skills and pursue more rigorous studies as they continue toward their degrees.

- **Implementation** [unique numbering of honors courses.] The Registrar explained that because of technical limitations, honors courses have to have unique numbers with the “H” suffix. If an honors course is multi-listed with another course, the “H” suffix cannot be added to the “M” indicating multi-listing and the “H” will not appear on a student’s transcript. This should be explained to honors course proposers. Also, courses cannot be differentiated by letters instead of numbers, per an agreement with other OUS schools.

- Council advised that a small but important change be made in the introductory paragraph of the document: “The ‘H’ suffix is intended to advise students that a course provides honors content of significant difficulty and requires honors effort from students” to “…requires honors-level performance from students.”

### III. UO COMMITTEE ON COURSES APPROVAL PROCESS FOR NEW AND REVISED COURSES

Paul related to the Council that one of the great challenges in the Course Review process is the lack of syllabi with new course proposals. Moreover, instructors sometimes question why syllabi must be submitted with course proposals, when in fact it is important for the UO Committee on Courses to use them as a basis for quality control and articulation with the rest of the curriculum. This has become especially challenging as the valuation of credit-hours has shifted from seat-time in the classroom (Carnegie Units) to total engagement time of a student with a course. The new measurement is now 30 hrs of effort per credit hour for undergraduates and 40 hrs of effort per credit hour for graduates. Syllabi need to demonstrate how this degree of effort will be required in proposed courses.
**DISCUSSION**

Council Chair invited members to provide their input and observations on the issue:

- A student representative noted that syllabi seem to be very subjective. It would be good if a department committee reviewed syllabi on a regular basis. Many times a syllabus seems disconnected from the course as it is actually taught in the classroom.

- Students cannot access syllabi for courses until they enroll in a class.

- There should be some kind of “syllabus intervention” resource for students who are frustrated with the seeming disconnect between syllabus and class.

- Students need to be proactive in studying the syllabus and interacting one-on-one with the instructor and the department to resolve an apparent conflict.

- Should the syllabus be included among the course elements students are asked to evaluate at the end of the course?

Creation of a central syllabus repository, which the Council had requested, has been stalled. The potential technical solutions originally proposed by IS staff have not proved feasible. Sue Eveland said the Registrar’s Office is looking for good commercial products for the creation of a syllabus repository.

Paul noted that the syllabus problem could also be mitigated by changes that are in the pipeline for the course approval process. The first is the addition of Kathy Warden to the Committee on Courses to help shepherd proposals through the approval process in a timely manner. The second is the development of an electronic processing and tracking system which will keep the history of a course proposal as it moves through the process. This should mitigate the frustration with the current “hurry-up-and-wait” process. It will also ensure that steps in the process are not overlooked, e.g. the submission of a syllabus for the proposed course. The Registrar is researching software products to bring the course approval process up to speed.

The meeting adjourned.

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*The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 17, 2012, 2:30 pm at the Collaboration Library of the Knight Library.*