UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
February 17, 2012
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT
Susan Anderson, Ashley Buchholz, Kathie Carpenter, Dean Livelybrooks, Ian McNeely, Karen Sprague, Michael Sugar, Zachary Taylor, Tom Wheeler, and Li-Shan Chou

ABSENT
Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, Sue Eveland, Dave Hubin, Jennifer Joslin, Loren Kajikawa, Karen McLaughlin, Ben Smood, Josh Snodgrass, Paul Engelking, and Elizabeth Reis

AGENDA
No formal agenda was set for the meeting.

MINUTES

I. MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 03, 2012 MEETING
The Chair called for any changes or emendments to the minutes of the previous meeting. There were none.

The motion was made to accept the minutes from the February 3, 2012 meeting.
  Moved: Dean Livelybrooks
  Seconded: Tom Wheeler

The motion to accept the minutes passed unanimously.

II. Continuation of Discussion on Course Approval Process
The Chair invited a continuation of the Council’s discussion of the course approval process in the UOCC (following up on the previous meeting’s recommendation to revise the criteria for Honors Courses).

There are two challenges in the course review process: 1) how to assure reasonable oversight of courses after initial approval, and 2) how to avoid discouraging faculty with good ideas through hyper-scrutiny of their proposals.

Some departments have become so frustrated with the process for course review that they avoid the process when courses are modified. Consequently, catalog descriptions may no longer match courses as they are actually taught. There is no follow-up once courses are officially “on the books” (in catalogs...
and on the class schedule) and this can lead to drift in courses over time. There is a valid argument for some post-approval review to rein in courses that have truly moved away from their intended focus. While the UOCC’s move to a more automated approval process will likely enhance efficiency, it will not solve the problem of ongoing oversight.

**DISCUSSION**

– The CAS Committee on Courses (CASCC) is studying whether or not to require a syllabus for new course proposals. Currently, the emphasis is on a “course prospectus” which is a descriptive course proposal explaining how the proposed new course fits within the curriculum. This prospectus is a self-guided document, completed by course proposers to be submitted to CASCC, which produces necessary information for course review. A syllabus is a different informational document --designed toward the student and not necessary for the Curriculum Committee. The UOCC does not accept the CASCC course prospectus as a syllabus. The CASCC and the UOCC are discussing whether or not a syllabus should be required in new course proposals along with the course prospectus. Furthermore, the two groups are studying whether change in course content, compared to the course description in the catalog, should trigger a course review. Even just a change in a course number or a title change to a course requires a new review cycle and has to be reviewed by the CASCC, the UOCC, and submitted to the Senate for approval.

– The complexity and lengthiness of the review cycle results in a tendency for faculty to avoid the process.

– One type of course that is problematic for review is the lab course, which needs to be evaluated differently from a lecture course. Student workload in lab courses is radically different from that in lecture courses.

– The suggestion has been made that catalog, curricular, and syllabi review of courses be folded in with the 10-year review of departments. However, courses need in-class reviews to be evaluated effectively.

– Departments could be encouraged to use their 10-year review preparations as an opportunity to carefully review the courses in their curriculum and how well classes are being taught.

– There is a question as to how informative student course evaluations are. For honest student evaluations, anonymity is needed. Students fear retaliation from professors and instructors if they (students) reveal their names in critical course reviews.

– To evaluate course syllabi, terms need to be clarified. Perhaps the question should be asked: how closely did the course match the way it was described in the syllabus? Or, how closely did the course match its description (generally, online in DuckWeb)?
- Instructors should ask for evaluations specific to the course outside of the official online evaluation. However, this is apparently not allowed by policy. (This may be due to FERPA restrictions or concern with student privacy.)

- It would be helpful if syllabi were publically available and there were a culture among faculty of sitting in on each others’ classes.

- Students seem to be getting angrier over the time they are to put into coursework. They call standard course requirements “outrageous demands.” (This could be a result of students having to take more outside jobs to pay for school.) Particularly, they complain if the workload in General Education courses is comparable to that in their major courses. There also seems to be more complaints in courses that require more initiative on the part of the students.

- General Educations courses are becoming problematic because students view them as “extra stuff” outside the majors.

- There should be a standardized syllabus form, requiring certain elements, e.g. “This is a 4-credit course and 120 hrs total work/study will be expected.”

- TEP could be a helpful resource for establishing communities of teaching. Susan Lesyk and Georgeanne Cooper will be invited to talk to the UGC about TEP and resources they may have to address some of these points.

The Council proposed an inventory of best practices for faculty in explaining student workload expectations:

- Show specific examples of excellent student work;
- Spell out work expectations of students;
- Establish a central, public syllabus repository

Other ideas that arose in discussion:

- Hold general orientation for professors and instructors who teach general education courses.
- There should be a campus culture that recognizes the value of General Education as a vehicle for cross-disciplinary exchange of ideas.
- Have faculty present their course proposals to the CASCC and/or UOCC in person; the face-to-face presentation has advantages to both sides.
The panel involved in developing the Science Literacy for Non-science Students can serve as a model for the development of teaching communities of faculty teaching General Education courses the panel includes. These panels are similar to the General Education Institutes that the Council has discussed. The model could extend to social sciences, humanities, or other broad inter-connected areas.

Quality teaching cannot be imposed from above; unfortunately, curriculum committees are sometimes forced into the policeman role.

III. ANNOUNCEMENT: SR. VICE PROVOST PROMOTION OF GRADE CULTURE COMPLIANCE
The Chair announced that Sr. Vice Provost Russ Tomlin has volunteered to help promote the Grade Culture compliance as approved by the University Senate.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 2, 2012 at the Collaboration Room in the Knight Library.