MINUTES

I. MINUTES FROM APRIL 26, 2012 MEETING

The Chair asked questions about the minutes from the April 26 meeting (since he had not been present), particularly any clarifications of the discussion regarding Honors courses.

– Was it true that all H courses had to go through the Honors College for approval? The Registrar affirmed that this is true. The UOCC checks course proposals to confirm that the Honors College has reviewed and accepted the H designation for a course. The Chair noted that the Associate Dean of the Honors College stated that this policy for the Honors College was not true. The Registrar countered that the requirement had been worked out between the Registrar’s Office and the CHC Dean, not the Associate Dean. This requirement is not explicitly stated in new Honors College criteria, but may exist in other records of the UOCC. Course proposers do not know about this requirement, however, because it is not available to the public. The Chair noted that this issue should be revisited by the Undergraduate Council.

– Another point of clarification was requested regarding whether courses could carry an honors designation and fulfill General Education requirements. College Scholar courses are topics courses. The Registrar explained that topics courses cannot be group-satisfying (except in the Honors College.) Council members recalled Paul Engelking suggesting that the barrier to designating experimental courses as “Honors” could be removed by converting them to topics
courses. Council members had thought that group-satisfying courses were included among the courses that could be handled in this way.

- Members questioned the extent of review that is required to change the number of an existing course. For instance, why do courses that have already been approved for group-satisfying or multicultural status have to be re-reviewed for the same status when only the course number is changed? The Registrar responded on behalf of the UOCC, pointing out that when a number is changed, the course has to be vetted just like any new course to assure that there is no change in course content. The Chair noted that this is a policy that needs to be discussed by the Council in the future. The Council needs to identify why course proposers are electing to “boycott” the approval process and what remedies can be proposed.

Two emendations were asked for in the minutes. The phrase “this is not allowable” was removed from a reference to the College Scholars program trying to use the same course for both group-satisfying or multicultural credit and honors; and Karen Sprague’s surname was added to the minutes for clarification in identification of a speaker.

The motion was made to accept the minutes from the April 26, 2012 meeting, as amended.

Moved: Karen McLaughlin
Seconded: Ron Bramhall

The motion to accept the minutes as amended passed unanimously.

II. ASSESSMENT
The Chair introduced Ken Doxsee, Associate Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, who presented the Council with the status of assessment in higher education and an outline of proposed steps for the UO to address the question of assessment. He presented a background of the need to develop an assessment process which arose out of the 2007 Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities re-accreditation visit to UO. In response, the UO has taken some steps to respond and develop a compliance plan, but much still needs to be done. There is a proliferation of national and state activities with direct or indirect relevance to the UO, but with the NWCCU moving from a 10-year accreditation cycle to a 7-year cycle (with required annual reports), the pressure is on for the UO to prepare for the year 5 report which is due in 2014. This report will focus on assessment.

Essentially, assessment will focus on the General Education curriculum. Ken described in some detail the plan UO is developing for a centrally coordinated and supported assessment which will feed departments/programs with most of what they need for their own assessment. Specific assessment would be a responsibility of the department; central coordination would facilitate what has to be done. The focus of assessment would be on accepted learning outcomes and development of a means of assessing (rubrics). UO would centrally generate an umbrella General Education report. This would be focused on “The Purpose of General Education at the University of Oregon,” a document developed by the Undergraduate Council some years ago. Departments would generate learning outcomes reports.
Observations from student self-report surveys (SERU, NSSE) and GPA reports would also be included in the assessment report. Ken shared examples of VALUE rubrics, LEAP Outcomes, and various articles discussing assessment, particularly “Assessment Clear and Simple; A practical guide for institutions, departments, and General Education” by Barbara E. Walvoord, with members of the Council.

Ken stressed that the whole purpose of the effort is to get ahead of the curve for assessment. There is extensive outside pressure for assessment, so UO wants to at least have control over how the assessment is shaped.

Council members raised questions about the assessment effort:

- It is difficult to imagine disaggregating the teaching of history; is there a risk that we are trading one bad system for another?
- Do faculty talk about General Education with their students? Are faculty aware that they are teaching liberal arts in the General Education curriculum?

Ken responded that he would like to see course syllabi tied into skills and outcomes.

The Chair said that the Undergraduate Council will take up discussion of UO assessment again in a future discussion.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 24, 2:00pm at the Collaboration Room of the Knight Library.