UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
January 28, 2013
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, John Gage, Dave Hubin, Madeleine Hudson, Alison Schmitke, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Beata Stawarska, Randy Sullivan, Karen McLaughlin, and Glenda Utsey

ABSENT
Ashley Buchholz, Paul Engelking, Sue Eveland, Jennifer Joslin, Loren Kajikawa, Diana Salazar, Ben Smood, Kerry Snodgrass, and Tom Wheeler

GUESTS
Lee Rumbarger, Teaching and Learning Center; Ian McNeely, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, CAS; and John Halliwill, Associate Professor, Human Physiology

AGENDA
Best practices in online education – Panel discussion. Panel guests:

• Kassia Dellabough, Adjunct Faculty & Director of PODS, AAA
• Stephen Fickas, Professor, Department of Computer and Information Science
• Sandra Gladney, Associate Director, Academic Extension
• Stephen Haynes, Professor Emeritus, Department of Economics
• Cathleen Leue, Director, CASIT
• Robert Voelker-Morris, IT Faculty Consultant, TEP/TLC

PANEL DISCUSSION ON PRACTICES IN ONLINE TEACHING
The Chair opened the meeting explaining that there was only one item on the agenda, viz. the presentation by a panel of UO IT directors, consultants, and faculty on their first-hand experiences working with online education. He introduced the panelists and invited them, one by one, to present to the Undergraduate Council their experience with online education. He added that there was interest in having the UGC sponsor an event at a later date where the campus at large would be invited to hear the panel.

Stephen Haynes, Department of Economics
Stephen distributed a handout to Council members that outlined the evolution of the development of Ec 201 and 202 (micro-and macroeconomic principles) and Ec 380 (international economics), which are taught online every fall, winter, and spring terms, with Ec 201 and Ec 202 also being taught summer term. Online presentations for Ec 201 and Ec 202 were initially offered in the early 1990s and were taught by a senior GTF when the class size was small. As class size grew, the online
courses were given to Professor Haynes, who has been teaching them for the past ten years. He pointed out that the online courses are taught in the same terms that they are scheduled as lecture courses. With everything else being the same, students are encouraged to take the lecture format courses when possible.

Increasing demand for Ec 201 and Ec 202 has allowed the online courses to be made available to students (as high as 700 in a year) who would otherwise be turned away from the already full lecture courses. Tests and exams for the online courses are handled through the Social Science Instructional Lab (SSIL), directed by Cathleen Leue. According to Prof. Haynes, there are fewer occurrences of cheating or other testing disruption in the SSIL procedure than in the regular large testing environment for the lecture class.

The Economics department did a statistical analysis of effectiveness in student preparation for moving through the course sequence of economics courses (Ec 311 and Ec 313) based on the online environment and the lecture format used for Ec 201 and Ec 202. Statistically, there is no difference in the effectiveness of the two modes of course presentation. Most students who take the online format courses do so for reasons of convenience. The online format provides some amount of schedule flexibility to students who live elsewhere, who work, or who have extensive extracurricular schedules (e.g., children and family responsibilities).

Stephen Haynes described how he designs the courses around a specific textbook he provides for students and utilizes BlackBoard and email for online course interaction through auxiliary questions and notes. There is no GTF assigned to the online courses. The online courses are designed for quality of content, not quantity of modes of presentation (e.g., there are no videos).

The cost for the online courses is now covered by the department, whereas previously it had been covered by student fees.

Robert Voelker-Morris, IT Faculty Consultant, Teaching Effectiveness Program/TLC
Robert Voelker-Morris talked about his work as a consultant for faculty interested in developing online courses. He provides support for best practices around educational technology in teaching. Up until 3-4 years ago, he offered a 6-week Summer Institute for faculty as an introduction to the utilization of educational technology. However, that course, as well as on focused on developing hybrid courses, was canceled for budgetary reasons. Voelker-Morris emphasized that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach in the development of online courses. Much variation is dependent on subject matter content and on the comfort level of the faculty with the media technology. The biggest advantage of the Summer Institute offering for faculty was that it provided the opportunity for peer exchange of ideas among faculty.

Kassia Dellabough, Adjunct Faculty & Director of Professional Outreach & Development for Students (PODS), AAA
Kassia Dellabough shared some “lessons learned” through her experiences with online courses beginning in 1997 when she began using educational technology in her Arts and Human Values course in AAA. She noted that even with online courses, students’ expectations have to be
managed, or the course can become a 24/7 time management challenge. She uses several discussion forums for students to direct specific types of their questions: questions of simple information and general “housekeeping”; questions for clarification of ideas; questions initiating broader discussions. Particularly helpful is the advantage that blogs/forums provide a transcript of student discussions and the development of ideas and questions can be followed. This enables the instructor to monitor students’ progress and provide feedback to move discussion along or to move it in a new direction. It also aids in assessing particular students’ engagement with the course.

Dellabough reinforced Robert’s advice on designing online courses – one “format” will not work for all courses:

– The hybrid format is ideal for some courses;
– The lecture format is best for some courses; and,
– The online format is best for some courses.

It all depends on the content of the course.

Cathleen Leue, Director, CAS IT and Social Science Instructional Laboratory (SSIL)

Cathleen Leue said that SSIL started in response to the desire for online assessment of courses. 95% of students attend courses on-campus. Most courses assessed through SSIL are General Education courses. 1000 – 15000 students per term test in their courses through SSIL. Students are given the flexibility to schedule their own testing dates. Instructors have access to the exams in their specific courses. SSIL creates randomized exams for courses and tries to provide some statistical data to instructors regarding the exams in their courses.

Online courses in summer are popular with students. Online courses could help relieve the space crunch on campus. And online courses have the advantage of not being canceled if the instructor is traveling or has to be away from campus.

Sandra Gladney, Associate Director, Academic Extension

Sandra explained that Academic is an auxiliary service to Academic Affairs.

Scalability of enrollment is a factor in instructional design.

Open enrollment versus cohort model.

She presented several questions that need to be kept in mind as the UGC explores online instruction:

– What is the goal? What is the motivation for following a particular innovation?
– Why follow a particular instructional design?

These questions highlight the inherent tension in UO between the wider goals of the institution versus department/school limitations.
Stephen Fickas, Professor, Department of Computer and Information Science
Stephen spoke about his monitoring some Coursera MOOCs on line:
- there were no email addresses available for interaction among students or between students and instructor;
- online testing was handled by “autograders”;
- online testing (which was basically fill-in-the-blanks and multiple choice) provided helpful feedback;
- videos were fair; they seem to be improving;
- the courses seemed like students were lecturing, not professors.

Stephen then went on to describe what he has learned by going through the process of designing a MOOC himself:
- he is using a 100-level apps course in Computer Science for his content;
- building videos for the course is extremely time consuming and he has recruited students to help him with this element;
- he has learned that it is very difficult adapting to an online format.

He will continue with his research into the process of building a MOOC and will update the UGC with the results.

Discussion
The Council was interested in the panelists’ comments and had a few questions:

Q. (to Prof. Fickas) Has the experience of developing a MOOC impacted teaching in lecture classes?
A. Yes – he has reduced lecture time and moved to a “flipped class” format (although he cautioned that this would not work for all classes).

Q. What is a distinct advantage of online classes?
A. One luxury of online classes is the fact that the content of the course is built before the course is presented. This means that lecture preparation time can then be devoted to feedback one-on-one with students.

The Chair closed the meeting.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 11, 2013, 12:30pm in the Collaboration Room of the Knight Library.