UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
February 11, 2013
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

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

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

GUESTS
Kassia Dellabough, Director PODS, Sr. Program Manager, Architecture and Allied Arts; Sandra Gladney, Associate Director, Academic Extension; Ruth Keele, Assistant Vice Provost, Academic Affairs

AGENDA

I. Sample of online courses (Guests: Dellabough & Gladney)
   – Kassia Dellabough, Adjunct Faculty & Director of PODS, AAA
   – Sandra Gladney, Associate Director, Academic Extension

II. Presentation of data on online grading and staffing (Sprague & Snodgrass)

III. MOOCs revisited (Snodgrass & Bramhall)

MINUTES

* NON AGENDA ITEM: MINUTES FROM JANUARY 14, 2013 MEETING

(Out of chronological order) The Chair asked for a review of the minutes of the January 14, 2013 meeting and any emendments. A correction was made in the attendance record (Karen McLaughlin was actually absent) and a typographical misspelling was corrected.

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the January 14, 2013 meeting as emended.

  Moved: Randy Sullivan
  Seconded: Ron Bramhall

The motion was approved unanimously.
I. PRESENTATION OF CURRENT ON-LINE COURSE OFFERED IN AAA AT THE UO

Kassia Dellabough presented her experience with building and administrating her online course, AAD 250 Art and Human Values, with comments about on-line instruction as compared with face-to-face instruction. She framed her remarks around scheduling in the course, discussions, evaluations, and feedback to students.

This specific course was developed in 1997, before Blackboard became used on the UO campus. The course has progressed in its development as technology on campus has developed. Faculty have differing attitudes toward on-line instruction: some will move to on-line instruction because they’re curious; a larger group is interested but will be reluctant because of feeling overwhelmed by technology and the heavy investment of time; and a few will simply resist on-line instruction because of a natural preference for the face-to-face paradigm.

There are similarities in the various degrees of student engagement in both modalities. In a face-to-face class, students can avoid attendance because there is a set time and location for the class. In an on-line environment, e.g. Blackboard, student attendance and participation can be tracked. There is documentation of when students engage with the course, even in asynchronous courses. However, in the on-line environment, students need to be “prompted” to attend the course. There needs to be a lot of redundancy in communications, principally through e-mail, Blackboard announcements, and sometimes even social media. Assignments are not posted all at once because this could be too overwhelming for students.

An animated video is used to outline expectations in the course. (The course is listed as counting toward the Multicultural Group requirement.)

Discussion is integral to the class through online blogs and forums. The instructor sends prompts and posts some provocative comments/questions to stimulate student responses. The advantage of the online format is getting “complete” ideas or perspectives from students. These types of exchanges are not as accessible in the face-to-face format. Online courses allow the instructor to monitor the depth of students’ engagement with the course. Task alerts are posted in Blackboard.

Reading online is an issue because not everyone learns through reading; many students depend heavily on auditory signals (hence, the animated video).

There are generally about 45 students enrolled in the online course format. Skype and the telephone are used to hold personal meetings with off-campus students. The goal of the online format is to create virtual teams (small groups) in a virtual environment.

A few comments on Blackboard: it has gone overboard in adding bells and whistles. The instructor often has to turn off a lot of the added features in order to design a class. However, the Dashboard, email, and journal features are helpful. The design of this course is moving to a “scrolling” format of text, rather than buttons and pop-ups. University course designers for online courses are working to meet together to work on developing procedures and protocols.
Discussion

Council members asked Kassia several questions:

– Is an online course designed all at once, or over a period of time (including iterations of the course)?
  
  *Answer:* There was no specific answer to this question, although the discussion suggests that it varies.

– How do you control for plagiarism in online courses?
  
  *Answer:* Plagiarism exists in all courses, but online courses have access to technological capacities to spot anomalies in student papers.

The Chair said that it is clear from the discussion that there is as much variety in online course design as there is in face-to-face course design.

Kassia and Sandra left the meeting as the Council reviewed the minutes from the January 14, 2013 meeting.

II. DATA ON ONLINE GRADING AND STAFFING

The Chair distributed a matrix of a comparison of grade distribution in regular courses and online courses based on data from the Registrar’s Office. Not counted in the matrix are “P/NP” courses nor courses with 10 or fewer students. Total department grade distributions might include online courses, but don’t include Academic Extension Courses.

Discussion

As Council members reviewed the data report, they raised several questions:

– Is there a way to determine how students are self-selecting for online courses?

– Is there a way to verify that online classes are actually meeting?

– If we have a lot of courses where students don’t have to attend in order to pass the course, then maybe we have a pedagogical problem.

The Chair distributed another table which showed the student credit hours distributed among permanent tenured instructors, adjunct faculty and Multicultural and General Education courses. Several issues revealed in the data were mentioned:

– Low quality large classes exist in both lecture format and online courses;

– There is clearly a grade inflation problem in both online and regular courses;

– Is course information being shared among instructors?
– Should we be tracking students through their majors (looking at who took online courses in the lower division and how they did in subsequent courses that depended on the lower division courses)?

– Medical schools are not currently favoring online courses for core science foundation courses. Medical school anatomy courses have been moving online, but the trend is back to more hands-on courses;

– Are Multicultural and Group courses being “outsourced” by departments to adjunct faculty?

– The last-minute hiring of adjuncts to teach courses just before a term begins is problematic—is this becoming a pattern or is it a short-term issue in response to enrollment pressure?

Prior to closing the meeting, the Chair previewed the topics that will be discussed over the next two meetings before the end of the term.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 25, 2013 at 12:30pm in the Collaboration Room of the Knight Library (Rm 122).