UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
October 19, 2012
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT
Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, Ashley Buchholz, Dave Hubin, Madeleine Hudson, Jennifer Joslin, Alison Schmitke, Kerry Snodgrass, Beata Stawarska, and Randy Sullivan

ABSENT
Susan Anderson, Sue Eveland, Loren Kajikawa, Diana Salazar, Ben Smood, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Tom Wheeler, and Paul Engelking

AGENDA
To focus on online courses, discussing two issues:
   I. Oversight of online courses
   II. Broader recommendations for the role of online education at UO.

The meeting presider was Ron Bramhall, due to the absence of the Chair and the Vice Provost who were each attending out-of-state meeting commitments.

MINUTES

* NON-AGENDA ITEM: COUNCIL STATEMENT ON POSSIBLE DISSOLUTION OF DIVISION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES
Randy Sullivan presented a preliminary proposal that the Undergraduate Council submit a statement to the Provost regarding any idea of dissolving the Division of Undergraduate Studies. Members felt the Undergraduate Council should be involved and consulted on any decision of this matter since it is an academic issue and impacts the purview of the Council. The presider will forward this proposal to the Chair for consideration as a future agenda item.

I. OVERSIGHT OF ONLINE COURSES &
   II. BROADER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ROLE OF ONLINE EDUCATION AT UO
The presider opened the discussion on online education by noting that short term policy and the bigger picture are intertwined. Members explored current practices and the challenges inherent in the issue of online courses:

   – Q. What is the current practice at UO?
     Courses that already exist can be moved directly to an on-line format without institutional review or oversight, although some departments seem to have a review for such transitions.
Q. How can student performance be observed or monitored in online courses?
For some subject areas (e.g., math or the physical sciences) there is software developed that assists in monitoring student performance and in pinpointing exactly where and at what point students become “stuck” in their learning. This enables faculty to address specific confusion or misunderstanding in course knowledge and information. Innovations are moving to provide similar “machine monitoring” for other course areas, even in the humanities.

Q. How can rigor in online delivery of courses be assessed?
This is not quite so clear. There is no data at this time by which content and rigor can be measured or benchmarked. Anecdotally, the rigor of online coursework appears to be widely varied. Students remarked that their experience of online coursework was less than satisfactory because often faculty simply transferred slides and PowerPoints (or even entire textbooks) to web access and then told the students they were “on their own.” Some students noted that the experience left them feeling short-changed in their learning.

As the discussion continued, members felt it was important for the Council to broaden its consultation on the issue, inviting input from faculty who actually teach on-line courses to come and talk with the Council about their experience.

The Council also felt it was important to understand what was driving the movement to online delivery at the UO. Some felt that the growing number of students was a big factor, but were not sure this was a valid reason to rush into online courses as a remedy. The Council did agree that it is important to get ahead of the issue, even though it seems to be a moving target.

The Council also discussed what its role in the issue should be. It was noted that there seem to be two issues that need sorting out: a) a policy of course oversight; and, b) the mechanics of oversight of online courses themselves. Another challenge is determining whether or not a course that changes delivery modality becomes a “new” course, requiring a different number and, consequently, a new review. Some members felt that online delivery for pre-existing courses should be treated as new courses, necessitating new review with additional consultation with a representative IT panel.

The Council agreed that the Undergraduate Council should focus on developing recommendations for good pedagogy for online courses. Members felt that the UGC can work to increase the rigor of online courses by developing a framework of good practice allowing for emerging technology. This framework should be formed with input from faculty, students, and administration. The UGC can facilitate excellence in online courses by suggesting triggers for course reviews within departments. The actual work of the oversight should reside within the departments.

It was noted that many faculty transitioning to online courses need “how to” training. Some do not give evidence of understanding the difference between technology as a tool and creating an online learning environment. It is very important that online courses exhibit added value in their presentation.
The presider will forward discussion notes to the Chair for review. The discussion will continue.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 2, 2012 at 2:00pm in the Collaboration Room, Knight Library (Rm 122).